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THE MEMOIRS OF  
BARON DE MARBOT





# THE MEMOIRS OF BARON DE MARBOT

LATE  
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL IN THE FRENCH ARMY

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH  
by  
ARTHUR JOHN BUTLER  
LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE



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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

*THIS ENGLISH* version of what is in some respects the most interesting book that has appeared in France—or for that matter in either country—for a generation must be taken for what it is, namely, an attempt to convey some of the interest of this work to English readers who do not read French fluently. Owing to circumstances not necessary to specify here, the work was entrusted to a translator whose principal qualifications were a fair knowledge of French, and just enough acquaintance with French military terms to be aware that *brigadier* does not mean a brigadier, nor *maréchal de camp* a field-marshal. Further, the different conditions of the book-market in England and France made it impossible to render the 1,200 and odd pages of the original in their entirety; and consequently the whole work, except the most exciting episodes, has had to be condensed, and several passages reduced to little more than abstracts. These last are indicated by brackets. The book has been less injured than some would be by this treatment—for “style” was not General Marbot’s forte. He tells his stories (and excellent stories they are) quite intelligibly, and with the most engaging good faith, but with a decided excess of relative clauses. On the other hand, it has been thought expedient to preserve, as far as possible, the colloquial turns of phrase which abound, and give the recital much of its freshness. Whether it be that a good deal of the book was composed by the process of copying notes made at the moment, or that the author, as he wrote, identified himself with his former self to the point of adapting his diction to the period of his life which he happened to be recording, it is certainly noticeable that these colloquialisms are much less frequent in the latter portions of the book. In fact, from the beginning of the Russian campaign and his own promotion to the command of a regiment, a curious accession of seriousness is to be remarked, and at last a tone of positive bitterness when the enemies of France are mentioned. No doubt the recollection of that time was enough to inspire seriousness,

and even occasional bitterness, in the tone of any Frenchman who had taken part in its events

On the whole, the author's fairness is very conspicuous. Though attached to Napoleon, he is by no means a blind partisan, and when he thinks the Emperor in the wrong, does not scruple to say so. When, as in the case of Napoleon's conduct towards Prince Hatzfeld, or his treatment of Hofer, we miss any expression of the reprobation with which most honest men regard those deeds, it is clearly because General Marbot only knew the versions current in France. He was not writing history, still less criticism ; nor does he, as a rule, lay any claim to special knowledge in regard to matters which did not fall under his personal observation. For this reason it has been thought worth while to depart from the course usually and rightly followed in the case of translations, and to append an occasional note to statements which seem at variance with the facts as established after investigation of evidence by professed historians (and that even in cases where Marbot's evidence ought probably to be accepted), most of all in those portions of the story which are especially likely to interest English readers. That these notes may now and then have been prompted by a feeling akin to that which made Dr. Johnson object to "letting the Whig dogs have the best of it" the translator is not concerned to deny. If so, it is a tribute to the interest of the book. It should here be mentioned that the notes due to the translator are distinguished by brackets. Where names have been suppressed by the French editors it has been felt that any attempt to supply them would hardly be in good taste.

As to the question which has been raised in some quarters with regard to the genuineness of the Memoirs, it will suffice to say that there are persons of the highest authority who were acquainted with General Marbot, saw the Memoirs in MS. during his lifetime, and vouch for the virtual identity of the book as now published with what they then saw. Its genuineness once established, it is hardly possible to doubt that it is a faithful record. There is sincerity in every line of it. With an utter absence of anything like swagger, there is no pretence of self-depreciation. Whether in his younger days Marbot performs some daring feat of arms, or in a more responsible position saves his regiment by his own good management from some of the worst miseries of the Russian retreat, he knows that what he did is creditable to him, and does not mind, in a modest way, taking credit for it. When his services are recognized, his delight is

childlike ; "*C'était un des plus beaux jours de ma vie*" is almost a refrain, at least in the first half of the book ; when the promised reward is delayed, he makes no affectation of indifference. The boyish countenance which he seems to have borne, even at thirty years old, is the outward sign of a boyish temperament, using the word in its best sense and in no way so as to detract from the type of an almost ideal soldier such as the book presents to us, the soldier who—

Through the heat of conflict keeps the law  
In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw,  
Or if an unexpected call succeed,  
Come when it will, is equal to the need

Is yet a soul whose master-bias leans  
To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes.

But the book needs no introduction to English readers. Since its appearance in France, many notices of it have appeared in our reviews and magazines, from the pens of approved men of letters, and must have made many, even of those who do not read French with ease, desirous of its further acquaintance. To some at least of these it is hoped that the present version may be of service. I am indebted to Mr. Archibald Forbes for several suggestions and corrections which have been embodied in this edition.

#### NOTE TO POCKET LIBRARY EDITION

IN editing the Memoirs of Baron de Marbot for inclusion in one volume of the Pocket Library the guiding principle has been to leave in full the baron's adventures as described in his own words, and to compress, where possible, his descriptions of campaigns and battles, all of which have been more fully and authoritatively dealt with by other well-known writers.



# THE MEMOIRS OF BARON DE MARBOT

## CHAPTER I

[*I WAS* born August 18, 1782, at my father's château of Larivière, in the vale of Beaulieu, on the borders of the Limousin and Quercy, now in the Department of Corrèze. My father was an only son, as were his father and grandfather before him. His income from land consequently amounted to what was, for our province, a considerable sum. Our family was of noble origin, although it had for a long time dropped any title; but our mode of living was what was called "noble"—that is, we lived on our own income, without adding to it by any profession or trade. The house was connected by marriage with many of the good families of the neighbourhood, and on terms of friendship with others—a point worth remarking, as showing the respect in which it was held at a period when the old nobility was in its full pride and power.

My father was born in 1753. He had received an excellent education and was a thoroughly cultivated man, loving study, literature, and art. Naturally hot-tempered, he had acquired self-control from the ways of the society in which he lived; and, being extremely kind-hearted, he would always do his best to efface the impression of any hasty word which in the first impulse of anger might have escaped him. He was a splendid man—very tall and strongly built; of dark complexion, with severe but handsome and regular features.

My father, in 1776, married the daughter of M. de Certain, a gentleman of small means but old family living within a few miles of our home at the château of Laval de Cère. They had four children—all sons. The eldest, Adolphe, is now major-general; I was the second; Theodore, the third; Felix, the youngest. We were born at intervals of about two years.]

I was of strong constitution, and never had an illness save

the small-pox, but my life was nearly cut short by an accident which happened when I was three years old. By reason of my snub nose and round face my father called me "the kitten." That was quite inducement enough to set me imitating a kitten, and I used to delight in going about on all-fours mewing. Every day I used to go upstairs in this way to the second floor, to be with my father in his library, where he used to pass the hottest part of the day. When he heard his "kitten" mew he would open the door and give me a volume of Buffon, that I might look at the pictures while he was reading. This I thought excellent fun; but one day I was not received with the usual welcome. My father, probably intent on more serious matters, did not open to his "kitten." Vainly I mewed more and more, in my most insinuating tones; the door remained closed. Then I noticed, on a level with the floor, a hole, which in all the country-houses in the South of France is made at the bottom of the door to allow the cat to get into the rooms, known as the "cat-hole." This was obviously my way, and I gently slipped my head through. But my body would not follow, nor could I draw my head back: it was caught. Though I was beginning to be strangled, I had so completely identified myself with my part of kitten, that, instead of speaking to let my father know of my unpleasant situation, I *mewed* with all my might, like a cat undergoing strangulation. It seems I did it so well that my father, thinking it part of the joke, was seized with a fit of helpless laughter. Suddenly, however, the mewing grew faint; my face turned blue; I swooned away. I imagine my father's alarm when he perceived the truth. With some difficulty he lifted the door from its hinges, released me, and carried me, still unconscious, to my mother. She, thinking me dead, was seized with hysterics. When I came to, a doctor was in the act of bleeding me. The sight of my own blood, and the anxiety of the whole household crowding round my mother and myself, made so vivid an impression on my childish imagination that the whole affair has remained deeply graven on my memory.

While my childhood was passing peacefully great events were preparing. The storm of revolution was already grumbling, and it was not long before it burst; 1789 had come. The first effect which the assembling of the States-General produced upon provincial tranquillity was discord in nearly every family. Ours did not escape: for my father, who had long been accustomed to



censure the abuses under which France laboured, acquiesced in principle in the proposed reforms, without any notion of the atrocities which would follow in the train of the changes. His brothers-in-law, on the other hand, and his friends rejected all alterations of the established state of things. Hence arose debates, of which I understood nothing, but was none the less distressed at seeing my mother endeavouring with tears to keep the peace between brothers and husband. Meanwhile, without knowing why, I was on the side of the moderate democrats, who had chosen my father, as unquestionably the ablest man of the neighbourhood, for their leader.

The Constituent Assembly abolished feudal quit-rents \* My father, as a man of noble family, possessed sundry such, which his father had bought, and was the first to accept the law. The peasants, waiting to follow his lead, as soon as they found that he ceased to collect his rents, ceased to pay theirs. Then came the division of France into departments. My father was appointed administrator of Corrèze, and, soon after, member of the Legislative Assembly.

My three uncles and nearly all the nobility of the district had gone abroad at once; and war seemed imminent. With the view of inducing all citizens to arm, and perhaps, too, of judging how far it could reckon on the energy of the people at large, the Government spread a report simultaneously in every parish that brigands under the leadership of the *émigrés* were coming to put down the new constitutions. The tocsin was rung in every church. Each man took up what arms he could; the national guards were organized, and the country with a warlike air awaited the alleged brigands, who were generally said to be in the next parish. None appeared, but the effect was produced; France had found herself in arms, and had shown that she was ready to defend herself. We were in the country alone with my mother, when this alarm, known as the Day of Fear, occurred. I was surprised, and should no doubt have been frightened had I not seen my mother pretty calm. I have always believed that my father, knowing her discretion, had given her a hint of what was to happen.

At the beginning there were no excesses on the part of the

\* [*Rentes féodales*, rent originally paid in lieu of military service by tenants qualified for such service, as opposed to rent paid by *roturiers*, for whom, as Hallam observes, there appears to be no English equivalent.]

peasantry. They had always in our district preserved a great respect for the old families. But when the town demagogues got at them attacks began on the houses of the gentry, nominally to search for concealed *émigrés*, really for plunder. Even my father's known patriotism, and the fact that he was then serving in the Army of the Pyrenees as captain of chasseurs, was insufficient to prevent the confiscation of a house which he had bought ten years ago at Saint-Céré. It was declared national property on the ground that it had passed by private contract, and that the vendor had left the country without ratifying the sale before a notary. It was sold by auction, and bought by the president of the district, at whose instance the proceedings had taken place. Finally, our own house was visited. They behaved politely to my mother, but said that they must burn the title-deeds of the feudal rents, and ascertain that her brothers were not concealed about the place. My mother gave them the deeds, and pointed out that her brothers, being, as they were aware, no fools, were not likely to have gone abroad in order to come back to France and hide in her house. They admitted the force of the argument, had a meal, burnt the deeds in the middle of the courtyard, and retired without doing any damage, shouting: "Huziah for the nation and citizen Marbot!" bidding my mother write and tell him that they loved him much, and that his family was quite safe with them.

Before long, however, my mother, not feeling sure that her position as sister to three *émigrés* was sufficiently balanced by that of wife to one of the country's defenders to ensure her against inconvenience, decided to leave home for a time. Like many others, as she has since told me, she was convinced that a few months would see the end of the disturbances. She determined to go to Rennes. One of her uncles, who had formerly served in the Penthievre regiment of foot, had on leaving the service married the widow of a member of the parliament of that city. With her my mother proposed to stay, taking me with her; but at the moment of starting I was attacked with painful boils, which made me too ill to travel so far. I was therefore left in charge of a friend—Mlle. Mongalvi, the mistress of a small girls' school at Turenne, where my mother had been one of the first pupils.

My mother reached her uncle's house at Rennes with the intention of staying two or three months. Public events followed with rapidity: The Terror bathed France in blood, and civil

war broke out in Brittany and Vendée. Travelling in those parts became impossible. My father was still with the army in the Pyrenees and in Spain, having been promoted to the rank of general of division. The end of it was that my mother remained at Rennes for several years.

I remained in my pleasant quarters till November 1793, when my father, who was in command of a camp which had been formed at Toulouse, took the opportunity of a few days' leave to come and see me at Turenne. His appearance in the uniform of a general officer with sword and enormous moustache, hair short and unpowdered, was a strange contrast to my recollection of him in the peaceful days at Larivière. As I have said, though stern in countenance he was exceedingly kind, especially to children, so we met with the keenest delight on my part, and abundance of caresses on his. His gratitude was great to the kind ladies who had taken really maternal care of me, but, as I was now in my twelfth year, he naturally decided that the time had come for a more masculine education. So it was decided that I should go with him to Toulouse, where my brother Adolphe was already, and that we should both be placed at the military college of Sorèze, the only large establishment of the kind which the Revolution had spared.

At Cressensac we found Captain Gault, my father's aide-de-camp. While we were halting here I saw a sight that I had never seen before. A marching column of gendarmes, national guards, and volunteers entered the little town, their band playing. I thought it grand, but could not understand why they should have in the middle of them a dozen carriages full of old gentlemen, ladies, and children, all looking very sad. My father was furious at the sight. He drew back from the window, and as he strode up and down the room with his aide-de-camp I heard him exclaim: "Those scoundrels of the Convention have spoilt the Revolution, which might have been so splendid! There is another batch of innocent people being taken off to prison because they are of good family, or have relations who have gone abroad! It is terrible!" I understood him perfectly, and, like him, I vowed hatred to the party of terror who spoilt the Revolution of 1789.

What my father had said awakened my lively interest in the persons whom the carriages contained. I found out that they were noble families who had been that morning arrested in their houses and were being carried to prison at Souilhac. I

was wondering how these old men, women, and children could be dangerous to the country when I heard one of the children ask for food. A lady begged a national guard to let her get out to buy provisions; he refused harshly; the lady then held out an *assignat*, and asked him to be so kind as to get her a loaf; to which he replied: "Do you think I am one of your old lackeys?" His brutality disgusted me; and having noticed that our servant Spire had placed in the pockets of the carriage sundry rolls, each lined with a sausage, I took two of them, and approaching the carriage where the children were, I threw these in when the guard's back was turned. Mother and children made such expressive signs of gratitude that I decided to victual all the prisoners, and accordingly took them all the stores that Spire had packed for the nourishment of four persons during the forty-eight hours which it would take us to reach Toulouse. We started without any suspicion on his part of the way in which I had disposed of them. The children kissed their hands to me, the parents bowed, and we set off. We had not gone a hundred yards when my father, who in his haste to escape from a sight which distressed him had not taken a meal at the inn, felt hungry and asked for the provisions. Spire mentioned the pockets in which he had placed them. My father and M. Gault rummaged the whole carriage and found nothing. I was rather in a quandary; however, not liking to let poor Spire be scolded any more, I confessed what I had done, fully expecting a slight reproof for having acted on my own authority. But my father only kissed me, and long afterwards he used to delight to speak of my conduct on that occasion.

From Cressensac to Toulouse the road swarmed with volunteers going gaily to join the Army of the Pyrenees, and the air rang with their patriotic songs. My father stopped at night to let me rest; but I was very tired when we got to Toulouse.

My father, as general commanding the camp (which was at Le Miral, near Toulouse), had a right to quarters, and the town council had assigned him the Hôtel Rességuier, a fine house, of which the owner had gone abroad. Mme. Rességuier and her son occupied a retired part of the house, and my father ordered that they should be treated with all respect. He entertained largely—indeed, to an extent which his general's allowance of eighteen rations per diem was insufficient to meet. His pay, except for the sum of eight francs a month, which all officers, of whatever rank, received in cash, was paid in *assignats*, the value

of which decreased daily, and he was compelled to draw upon the savings of former years.

Among the officers serving in the camp, two were especial favourites with my father, and received invitations more often than any. One, Augereau by name, was adjutant-general, that is, a colonel on the staff, the other, Lannes, a lieutenant of grenadiers in a volunteer battalion from the Gers. Both became marshals of the Empire, and I was aide-de-camp to both.

At this time Augereau had just come from service in Vendée, after previously escaping from the prisons of the Inquisition at Lisbon. He had been noticed for his courage and the ease with which he handled his troops. He was a good tactician, having learnt the science in Prussia, where he had long served in the foot-guards of Frederick the Great; whence his nickname of "le grand Prussien." He was always dressed irreproachably, in perfect trim; hair curled and powdered, long *queue*, his riding-boots highly polished, and withal a most martial bearing; all the more conspicuous that at that time a brilliant get-up was not common in the French army. His reputation as a tactician caused my father to entrust to him the training of the newly-raised battalions of which the division mostly consisted, coming chiefly from the central and south-western provinces. Augereau got them into excellent shape, little thinking that in so doing he was laying the foundations of his future renown; for the troops which my father then commanded formed in after times the celebrated "Augereau's division" which did so splendidly in the Eastern Pyrenees and in Italy.

Lieutenant Lannes was the most lively of young Gascons; witty, merry, devoid of learning or education, but desirous to learn, at a time when such a desire was rare. He became a very good instructor, and, having plenty of self-esteem, he received with inexpressible delight the praises which my father deservedly avished on him.

One fine morning my father received orders to strike his camp at Le Miral and march with his division to join the force under General Dugommier, then besieging Toulon, which the English had captured by a surprise.\* He then pointed out to me that I needed to study more seriously than had been possible in a girls' school, and that the next day he should take me to the college of

\* [August 27, 1793. As a matter of history, the surrender of Toulon seems to have been due to the fact that much disaffection to the Republican Government existed in the town and fleet.]

Sorèze, where he had already entered my brother and myself. I was quite taken aback. I could hardly believe that I was not to go back to my girl friends and Mlle. Mongalvi. Nor could the sight of the troops and guns which my father reviewed at Castelnaudary comfort me. My mind was full of the professors among whom I was going to be thrown. That night my father heard that the English had evacuated Toulon\* (December 18, 1793), and that he was ordered to the Eastern Pyrenees. He decided, therefore, to leave us at Sorèze the next day and go on to Perpignan.

## CHAPTER II

*I REMAINED* at Sorèze till February, 1799; I was then sixteen and a half years old. A friend of my father's, M. Dorignac, brought me to Paris, where we arrived on the night when the Odéon Theatre was burnt down for the first time. The blaze was to be seen reflected in the sky from a great distance on the Orleans road, and I quite believed that it was the natural glare of the street lamps of the capital. My family were living in the Rue de Faubourg Saint-Honoré, where I joined them the next morning. I have seldom had a happier day.

In the spring of 1799 the Republic was still in existence, the Government consisting of an executive Directory of five members, and two Chambers called Conseil des Anciens and Conseil des Cinq Cents. My father was intimate with many conspicuous people; I met at his house such men as Bernadotte, Joseph and Lucien Bonaparte, Napper Tandy (the leader of the Irish refugees), General Joubert, Cambacérès. In my mother's company I often saw Madame Bonaparte, Madame de Condorcet, and occasionally Madame de Staël.

A month after I came to Paris a general election took place. My father, tired of the incessant worries of political life, and not liking to be debarred from a share in the great deeds of our armies, declined to stand again, and expressed his wish to re-enter active service. The course of events suited his purpose

\* [Taking the French fleet, or most of it, with them. For a full account of the proceedings at Toulon, see James's *Naval History of Great Britain*, vol. i. pp. 91, *sqq.* It was at this recapture of Toulon that Napoleon Bonaparte, then an artillery officer, first distinguished himself.]

well With the new Chambers came a change of Ministry. Bernadotte became War Minister, and promised my father a post with the Army of the Rhine. As he was about to start for Mainz, the news came of the defeat of the Army of Italy under General Scherer; and Joubert, then in command of the 17th division at Paris, was sent by the Directory to replace him. The vacant command, one of political importance, and requiring a capable and strong man, was offered to my father. As his chief reason for resigning his seat in the Chamber had been his desire for active service, he at first declined; but on Bernadotte showing him his appointment already signed, with the remark that as a friend he begged him, and as a Minister ordered him, to accept it, my father yielded. On the following day he established himself at the head-quarters of the Paris division.

At that time there was much excitement in France, and particularly in Paris: we were on the eve of a catastrophe. The Russians, under the celebrated Souvaroff, had entered Italy, and had severely defeated our army at Novi. Joubert, the commander-in-chief, had been killed; Souvaroff was marching on our Army of Switzerland, where Masséna was in command. We had few troops on the Rhine. The peace conference which had been begun at Rastadt had been dissolved and our plenipotentiaries assassinated.\* The whole of Germany was arming anew against us; the Directory had fallen into discredit, and, having neither troops nor money to levy them, in order to procure funds had just decreed a forced loan, which had completed the measure of its unpopularity. Our last hopes were in Masséna; he alone could stop the Russians and prevent the invasion of France. The Directory sent despatch after despatch ordering him to give battle; but, like a modern Fabius, not wishing to risk the safety of his country, he waited till some false move on the part of the enemy should offer a chance of beating him.

Here I may relate an anecdote which shows on how small a matter the destiny of a state and the reputation of commanders sometimes turn. The Directory, irritated at seeing that Masséna did not obey their repeated order to give battle, resolved to recall him. They feared, however, that the commander-in-chief

\* [The Congress of Rastadt, held in order to settle some details in the Treaty of Campo Formio, sat from November 1797 to January 1799, when it was dissolved by the French plenipotentiaries. These were attacked by Austrian troops as they were returning to France, and two of them killed.]

would take no notice of their recall, and would simply put the despatch in his pocket if they forwarded it by an ordinary messenger, and accordingly instructed the War Minister to send to Switzerland a staff officer commissioned to hand the order of recall to Masséna in public, and to give to Chérin, his chief of the staff, a commission conferring on him the command of the army. Bernadotte imparted these arrangements in confidence to my father, who expressed disapproval of them, explaining how dangerous it was, on the eve of a decisive affair, to deprive the Army of Switzerland of a general in whom it had confidence, in order to replace him by one who had more experience in secretary's work than in manœuvring troops. Besides this the position of the armies might change. It would therefore be necessary to entrust with this mission a man capable of judging the state of affairs, and who was not likely to hand the order of recall to Masséna immediately before or during a battle. He persuaded the Minister to entrust the duty to M. Gault, his aide-de-camp, who should go to Switzerland under the ostensible pretext of ascertaining if the contractors had delivered the stipulated number of horses, and should be authorized to withhold or to hand over the order of recall to Masséna and the commission to General Chérin according as he should see fit under the circumstances. It was a good deal to confide to the judgment of a mere captain ; but M. Gault did not disappoint the good opinion formed of him. He reached the head-quarters of the army five days before the battle of Zurich, and found the troops so full of confidence in Masséna, and Masséna himself so calm and so firm, that he felt no doubt of his success. He maintained, therefore, the most profound silence with regard to his secret powers, and after being present at the battle of Zurich he returned to Paris without any suspicion on Masséna's part that this modest captain had had in his hands the power of depriving him of the glory of winning one of the finest victories of the age.

The victory of Zurich, while preventing an invasion, gave the Directory only a momentary credit. The Government was breaking down on all sides ; no one had any confidence in it. The finances had collapsed, Vendée and Brittany were in complete insurrection, there were no troops in the country, the South was in a blaze, the Chambers were quarrelling with each other and with the Executive—in short, the State was on the brink of ruin.

Every politician was aware that great changes were necessary and inevitable, but opinions differed as to the remedies to



be employed. The old Republicans, who stood by the Constitution of the year 3, which was still in force, held that to save the country it was enough to change some members of the Directory. Two of them were accordingly dismissed and replaced by Gohier and Moulins; but this was but a feeble palliative for the calamities under which the country was on the point of sinking, and the anarchical agitations continued. Therefore several of the Directors, among them the celebrated Sieyès, together with many of the Deputies and the vast majority of the public, held that in order to save France the reins of government should be put into the hands of some strong man who had already rendered illustrious services to the State. It was obvious also that such a chief could only be a soldier with a great influence in the army, who should be able to rekindle the enthusiasm of the nation, and so to restore victory to our flag, and to hold off the foreigners who were ready to cross our frontier.

The one man who satisfied these conditions was General Bonaparte; but at this moment he was in Egypt, and the need was pressing. Joubert had just been killed in Italy. Masséna was illustrious for his many victories, an excellent general at the head of an army in the field, but in no sense a statesman. Bernadotte appeared to have neither the talents nor the character required to heal the ills of France. The reformers, therefore, turned their thoughts towards Moreau, though his character inspired some fear as to his aptitude for governing. It is certain, however, that, failing a better man, it was proposed to him to put himself at the head of the party which wished to overthrow the Directory, and the chief post in the state was offered to him, with the title of President or Consul. Moreau, though a good soldier, and brave enough, lacked political courage, and possibly distrusted his own ability to manage affairs so disordered as those of France then were. At any rate, he refused the offer, and retired to his estate of Grosbois to amuse himself with his favourite field sports.

[Those who wished to change the form of government had, therefore, no alternative but to seek the co-operation of General Bonaparte. Sieyès, who was the chief mover in the scheme, was President of the Directory; and his calculation was that if he could get Bonaparte into power, the general, while nominally the head of the Government, would confine his attention to military organization, leaving to himself the real direction of affairs. As the sequel showed, he mistook his man; but this was

his thought, when, acting through the Corsican Deputy, Salicetti, he sent a trusty secret agent to Bonaparte to inform him of the unsatisfactory state of affairs, and invite him to return and put himself at the head of the Government.

Even with Bonaparte at hand it would be a difficult and dangerous business to overthrow the Directory without the support of the army, and more especially of the Paris division. Sieyès tried accordingly to win over Bernadotte and my father, first sounding them through the help of various Deputies who were at once their friends and his partisans. Later on I learnt that my father answered the half-advances of the astute Sieyès to the effect that, while he was well aware that the state of the country required prompt remedies, he had sworn to maintain the Constitution of the year 3, and he was not going to use his authority or the troops of his division to bring about the overthrow of that Constitution; after which he waited on Sieyès, resigned his command of the Paris division, and requested to have a division on active service. Sieyès was glad enough to get a man of my father's character out of the way, before he could spoil the plot by strict adherence to his duty, and hastened to accede to his request. Bernadotte resigned at the same time, and was replaced by Dubois-Crancé

There was some little delay before a man could be found to take my father's place; ultimately Sieyès gave the command to General Lefebvre, who was in Paris on leave, having been wounded with the Army of the Rhine. He was just the man that Sieyès wanted for commandant in Paris; and so sure was he that when the time came Lefebvre would not resist the influence of Bonaparte and his own cajoleries, that he did not even take the trouble to let him know what was expected of him. The 18th of Brumaire showed that he judged right. Lefebvre put his troops at the disposal of Bonaparte when he overthrew the Directory and established the Consulate; and earned thereby, in later days, the high favour of the Emperor, the title of Marshal Duke of Dantzic, and heaps of wealth.]

After handing over his command to General Lefebvre my father returned to the house in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and attended only to the preparations for his departure to Italy.

Very trifling causes often influence human destiny. My father and mother were very intimate with M. Barairon, Registrar-General. One day they were going to breakfast with him, and

took me with them. The conversation turned on my father's departure, and on the good conduct of my two younger brothers; finally, M. Barairon inquired, "What is Marcellin to be?" "A sailor," answered my father; "Captain Sibille has undertaken him, and is going to carry him off to Toulon." Whereupon good Mme. Barairon (I have always been most grateful to her for it) remarked to my father that the French navy was utterly disorganized, that the finances were in too bad a state to allow of its being quickly reformed, and that, moreover, its inferiority to the English fleet would keep it for some time shut up in the ports. She wondered that he, a general officer of the land forces, should put his son in the navy instead of in a regiment where his father's name and services would be sure to make him welcome. She ended by saying, "It would be better for you to take him to Italy than send him to be bored to death on board a vessel blockaded in Toulon harbour." My father was too clear-sighted to fail to see the force of Mme. Barairon's arguments. He turned to me saying, "Well, will you come to Italy with me and serve in the army?" I threw my arms round his neck and accepted with joy. My mother was equally glad, for she had been opposed to my father's first plan.

My father took me straight to the office of the first *arrondissement* in the Place Beauvau and enlisted me in the 1st Regiment of Hussars (the old "Bercheny"), which formed part of the division which he was about to command in Italy. This was September 3, 1799. He next took me to the tailor who supplied the Ministry of War with patterns and ordered for me a complete uniform and equipment. So I was actually a hussar; I was beside myself with joy. When the day of my departure came I took leave of my mother and my three brothers with grief, tempered though it was by my delight at entering on the career of arms.

### CHAPTER III

*BESIDES M. GAULT*, my father took another aide-de-camp, Major R——, who had been passed on to him by his friend General Augereau. This officer, who belonged to a Maintenon family, possessed talents and education of which he made little use; for, by a whim not uncommon at that time, he thought fit to adopt the style of a swashbuckler, for ever swearing, damn-ing,

and threatening to split people's heads. This bully had only one good point, and that one which then was rare : he was always most carefully dressed. My father was soon sorry that he had accepted him for his aide-de-camp without knowing him, but he could not dismiss him without offending his old friend Augereau. As, however, he did not care to have the company of M. R—— in a long journey, he had given him the duty of bringing his carriages and horses from Paris to Nice. Our old groom, Spire, a faithful servant, accustomed to looking after stablemen, was put under his orders. M. R—— started a month before us in command of a numerous caravan—fifteen horses belonging to my father, besides those of the staff, the baggage wagons, and so on.

In my father's carriage travelled M. Lachèze, Captain Gault, and I. Colonel Ménard, chief of the staff, with one of his assistant aides-de-camp, followed in a post-chaise. After staying a day at Mâcon with an old friend of my father's we pushed on towards Lyons. When we were changing horses at Limonest, within a few leagues of that town, we noticed that all the post-horses were adorned with tricoloured ribbons and the houses with flags. On asking the cause of this display we were told that Bonaparte had just arrived at Lyons. My father, thinking he knew for certain that Bonaparte was at the other end of Egypt, treated this piece of news as a joke. His astonishment was great when, on questioning the postmaster, who had just come from Lyons, he learnt that that official, who had served under Bonaparte in Italy and knew him well by sight, averred that he had seen him. "He is at Lyons, in the Hotel ——. His brother Louis, General Berthier, Lannes, and Murat are with him ; also many other officers and a mameluke." This was pretty positive evidence. Still the Revolution had given rise to so many impostures, and so much ingenuity had been shown in inventing stories to serve party purposes, that my father was still in doubt as we entered Lyons by the suburb of Vaise. The houses were all illuminated and beflagged, fireworks were being let off ; our carriage could hardly make its way through the crowd. People were dancing in the open spaces, and the air rang with cries of "Hurrah for Bonaparte ! he will save the country !" This evidence was irresistible ; we had to admit that Bonaparte was in Lyons. My father said, "Of course I thought they would bring him, but I never suspected it would be so soon ; they have played their game well. We shall see great events come to pass." With that he fell into deep thought,

lasting through the tedious interval required to make our way through the crowd, which grew thicker at every step, and reach our hotel.

Arrived there, we found it hung with lanterns and guarded by a battalion of grenadiers. They had given General Bonaparte the apartments ordered a week before for my father. Quick-tempered though he was, he said nothing, and when the landlord made somewhat confused apologies to the effect that he had been compelled to obey the orders of the town council, my father made no answer. On hearing that a lodging had been taken for us in a good hotel of the second class kept by a relation of the landlord's my father confined himself to bidding M. Gault order the postillions to drive thence. When we got there we found our courier—he was an excitable man, and, being well warmed by the numerous quenchers which he had taken at every halting-place on his long journey, had kicked up the devil's own row on learning, when he preceded us at the first hotel, that the apartments engaged for his master had been given to General Bonaparte. The aides-de-camp, hearing this fearful uproar and learning the cause of it, went to let their chief know that General Marbot had been thrown over for him. At the same moment Bonaparte himself, through his open window, perceived my father's two carriages standing before the door. Up to then he had known nothing of his landlord's shabby behaviour towards my father, and, seeing that General Marbot, recently commandant of Paris, and at that moment at the head of a division of the Army of Italy, was too important a man for any offhand treatment, and that, moreover, he himself was returning with the intention of being on a good footing with everybody, he ordered one of his officers to go down at once and offer General Marbot to come and share his lodging with him in soldier fashion. But the carriages went on before the aide-de-camp could speak to my father; so Bonaparte started at once on foot in order to come and express his regret in person. We were all in the sitting-room, and my father was pacing up and down plunged in meditation, when suddenly a waiter, throwing open both folding-doors, announced General Bonaparte.

On entering, he ran up to my father and embraced him; my father received him courteously but coldly. They were old acquaintances, and between persons of their rank a few words were sufficient to explain matters with regard to the lodging. They had much else to talk of, so they went alone into the

bedroom, where they conferred together for more than an hour. Meanwhile the generals and officers who had come with Bonaparte from Egypt chatted with us in the sitting-room. I was never tired of studying their martial air, their faces bronzed by the Eastern sun, their strange costumes, and their Turkish sabres slung by cords. I listened attentively to their tales of the campaigns in Egypt and the battles fought there. I enjoyed the repetition of the celebrated names, Pyramids, Nile, Cairo, Alexandria, Acre, and so forth. But what delighted me most was the sight of the young mameluke Roustan. He had waited in the antechamber, and I went there more than once to admire his costume, which he was pleased to show me. He could already speak French pretty well, and I was never tired of asking him questions. General Lannes remembered how he had let me fire his pistols in 1793, when he was serving under my father at the camp of Le Miral. He was very good-natured to me, and neither of us suspected then that I should one day be his aide-de-camp, and that he would die in my arms at Essling.

General Murat had been born in our own neighbourhood, and as he had been shopboy to a haberdasher at Saint-Céré in the days when my family used to spend the winter there, he had often come with goods for my mother. My father, too, had done him several kindnesses, for which he was always grateful. He kissed me and reminded me how he had often carried me when I was a baby. Later on I shall relate the life of this famous man who rose so high from so low an origin.

General Bonaparte and my father returned into the sitting-room, and introduced to each other the members of their respective staffs. Lannes and Murat were old acquaintances of my father's, and he received them very cordially. He was somewhat cold towards Berthier, whom he had seen in old days at Marseilles when he was in the body-guard and Berthier an engineer. General Bonaparte asked me very courteously for news of my mother, and complimented me in a kind manner on having taken up the military career so young. Then, gently pinching my ear—the flattering caress which he always employed to persons with whom he was pleased—he said, addressing my father, “Here will be a second General Marbot some day.” His forecast has been verified, though at that time I had little hope of it. All the same, his words made me feel proud all over—it doesn't take much to awaken the pride of a child.

The visit came to an end, and my father gave no indication

of what had passed between General Bonaparte and himself ; but I learnt later on that Bonaparte, without actually betraying his schemes, had endeavoured by the most adroit cajoleries to enlist my father on his side. My father, however, steadily evaded the question.

So shocked was he at the sight of the people of Lyons running to meet Bonaparte, as if he were already sovereign of France, that he expressed a wish to get away next morning at daybreak ; but his carriages required repair, and he was forced to stay an entire day at Lyons. My father went to return General Bonaparte's visit. They walked for a long time alone in the little garden of the hotel, while their staffs kept at a respectful distance. We saw them at one time vigorously gesticulating, at another talking more calmly ; presently Bonaparte, coming close to my father with a coaxing air, took his arm in a friendly fashion. My father came out from this second conversation even more thoughtful than from the first, and on entering the hotel he gave orders that we should proceed on the following day. But General Bonaparte was going to make a visit of inspection of the points in the neighbourhood of the town suitable for fortification, and all the post-horses had been engaged for him. For the moment I thought that my father would be angry, but he confined himself to saying : " There's the beginning of omnipotence." He gave orders that an effort should be made to hire some horses, so eager was he to get away from the town and to escape a spectacle which shocked him. No horses were to be found, thereupon Colonel Ménard, who was a native of the South, and knew the country thoroughly, remarked that the road from Lyons to Avignon was terribly dilapidated, and that as there was every possibility that our carriages would get damaged, it would be much better to ship them on the Rhone, and descend the river in the midst of charming scenery. My father, who cared very little for the picturesque, would at any other time have rejected this suggestion ; but it gave him the chance of getting away a day sooner from the town of Lyons. So we pushed on and in due time reached Nice.

The town of Nice was full of troops, among them a squadron of my regiment, the 1st Hussars. In the colonel's absence the regiment was commanded by Major Muller, a brave officer, father of the poor adjutant of the 7th Hussars who was wounded at my side by a cannon-ball at Waterloo. On learning that the divisional commander had arrived, Major Muller waited on my

father ; and it was settled that after a few days' rest I should begin my service in the 7th troop, commanded by Captain Mathis, a meritorious officer, who became colonel under the Empire and major-general under the Restoration.

I passed several days with my father and his staff going over the beautiful country about Nice. When the time came for me to join, my father directed Major Muller to send Sergeant Pertelay to him. Now you must know that there were in the regiment two brothers of this name, both sergeants, but quite unlike each other morally and physically. It was the younger whom the colonel had intended to recommend as my mentor ; but, being in a hurry, he had omitted when naming Pertelay to add "junior." Further, this Pertelay was not in the squadron at Nice, whereas the elder was actually in Troop 7, to which I was to belong. Major Muller therefore supposed that it was the elder brother whom the colonel had named to my father ; and that this wild fellow had been selected in order to take the nonsense out of a mild and shy lad like myself. So he sent us Pertelay senior.

This typical hussar of the old school was a hard drinker, a brawler, always ready for a quarrel and a fight ; brave, moreover, to the point of rashness. He was absolutely ignorant of everything that did not concern his horse, his accoutrements, or his service in the field. Pertelay junior, on the other hand, was gentle, well-mannered, highly educated ; and, being also a very handsome man and every whit as brave as his brother, he would certainly have got on fast had he not been killed, while still young, on the battlefield. However, to return to the elder. He came to my father's house, and what did we behold ? A jolly ruffian—very well set up, I must admit—with his shako over his ear, his sabre trailing, his florid countenance divided by an enormous scar, moustaches half a foot long waxed and turned up to his ears, on his temples two long locks of hair plaited, which came from under his shako and fell on his breast, and withal such an air !—a regular rowdy air, heightened still further by his words, jerked out in the most barbarous French-Alsatian gibberish. Later on, I learnt that my father had had some hesitation in entrusting me to the hands of this fellow, but M. Gault pointed out that Colonel Picart had specified him as the best non-commissioned officer in the squadron, and so he resolved to give him a trial. Accordingly I followed Pertelay, who took my arm in an off-hand way, came to my room, showed me how to pack up



my things, and brought me to a little barrack establishment in an old convent and occupied by a squadron of the 1st Hussars. He made me saddle and unsaddle a handsome little horse which my father had bought for me. Then he showed me how to dispose of my cloak and accoutrements, showed me, in short, all that was to be shown. When he had explained everything he bethought him that it was time to go to dinner; for my father, wishing me to take my meals with my mentor, had allowed us extra pay for this item. Pertelay brought me to a little inn, where the dining-room was full of hussars, grenadiers, and soldiers of all arms. Our dinner was served, and on the table was placed an enormous bottle of the strongest and roughest red wine, of which Pertelay poured me out a bumper. We clinked our glasses; my friend emptied his. I set mine down without putting it to my lips, for I had never drunk unmixed wine, and I did not like the smell of this. I confessed as much to my mentor, who straightway shouted in a stentorian voice, "Waiter, lemonade for this lad—he never drinks wine." Shouts of laughter rang through the whole room. I was much abashed, but I could not make up my mind to taste this wine, nor did I dare to ask for water so I dined without drinking.

The apprenticeship of a soldier's life is at all times pretty rough; it was especially so at the time of which I am writing, and I had some disagreeable moments to pass. But what seemed to me intolerable was to be obliged to sleep with another hussar, for the regulations at that time only allowed one bed for two soldiers. Non-commissioned officers alone had a bed to themselves. The first night which I passed in barracks I had just got into bed, when a strapping great hussar, who had come in an hour after the others, came up to the bed, and, seeing that there was someone there already, unhooked the lamp and put it under my nose to have a better look at me. As I watched him undressing I had no idea that he proposed to take his place by me, but I was soon undeceived, when he said roughly, "Make room, recruit." Therewith he got into the bed, lay down so as to take up three-quarters of it, and set to work snoring in a high key. I found it impossible to sleep, chiefly by reason of the horrible smell which emanated from a great bundle placed by my comrade under the bolster to raise his head. I couldn't imagine what it could be. In order to find out I slipped my hand gently towards the object and discovered a leathern apron well impregnated with cobbler's wax. My amiable bedfellow was one of the regimental

shoemaker's assistants. I was so disgusted that I got up, dressed, and went to the stable to sleep on a truss of straw. Next day I imparted my misfortune to Pertelay, who reported it to our sub-lieutenant. Understanding how disagreeable it must be to me to sleep with a shoemaker, he ordered me on his own responsibility a bed in the non-commissioned officers' room, which was a great comfort to me.

Although with the Revolution military costume had become slovenly, the 1st Hussars had always preserved theirs as correct as in the days when they were Bercheny. Save, therefore, for the physical dissimilarities imposed by nature, all the troopers were bound to get themselves up alike, and as the hussar regiments at that time wore not only a pigtail but also long "love locks" on the temples, and had their moustaches turned up, everyone belonging to the corps was expected to have moustaches, pigtails, and locks. As I had none of them, my mentor took me to the regimental barber, where I purchased a sham pigtail and locks. These were attached to my hair, which was already fairly long, for since my enlistment I had let it grow. I was embarrassed at first by this make-up, but in a few days I got used to it, and enjoyed it because I thought it gave me the air of an old hussar. With regard to moustaches the case was different. Of them I had no more than a girl, and as a beardless face would have spoilt the uniformity of the squadron, Pertelay, in conformity with the practice of the regiment, took a pot of blacking and with his thumb made two enormous hooks covering my upper lip and reaching almost to my eyes. At that time the shakoes had no peak, so it happened that during reviews or when I was doing vedette duty and was bound to remain perfectly motionless, the scorching rays of the Italian sun pouring down on to my face used to suck up the liquid part of the blacking with which my moustaches had been made, and the blacking as it dried drew my skin in a very unpleasant way.

My father's chief motive, in making me go through my service in the ranks, was to get rid of my rather foolish schoolboy air. He succeeded beyond his hopes, for, living in the middle of the boisterous hussars, and having for my tutor a kind of Pandour who laughed at all my follies, I learnt to suit my conduct to my company, and for fear of being laughed at for my shyness I became a perfect daredevil, and was soon admitted into a sort of brotherhood which, under the name of "the gang," drew its initiated from all the squadrons of the 1st Hussars. The "gang"

was composed of the most reckless and the bravest soldiers of the regiment; its members supported each other against all comers, especially in presence of the enemy. They called each other by the name of *loustic*\*, and were to be known by means of a notch made with a knife in the first button of the row on the right side of the pelusse and the jacket. The officers knew of the existence of the gang, but as its greatest crimes were limited to the occasional looting of sheep and fowls, or playing tricks on the inhabitants, while, on the other hand, the *loustics* were always the first under fire, the chiefs winked at it.

## CHAPTER IV

*WITH THE* good fortune which attended my military career, I avoided altogether the grade of corporal, passing at a leap from the ranks to the position of sergeant, which befell in this wise. To the left of my father's division was stationed that of General Séras, with its head-quarters at Finale. General Séras, having received orders from the commander-in-chief, General Championnet, to push a reconnaissance into the valleys beyond Monte San Giacomo, wrote to my father begging him to lend him for this expedition a detachment of fifty hussars. My father naturally agreed, and appointed Lieutenant Lesteinschneider to command the detachment of which my section formed part. We started from La Madona to go to Finale; the only road along the coast then was a very bad one, called La Corniche. The lieutenant happened to dislocate his foot in consequence of a fall from his horse, and the next in rank to him was Sergeant Canon, a fine young man, well educated, possessing plenty of ability, and still more assurance. On the following day General Séras led his force over Monte San Giacomo, where we bivouacked in the snow. We were pretty certain the next day, if we advanced, to come in contact with the enemy; but in what strength should we find them? The general had no notion; his orders were to reconnoitre the position of the Austrians in this part of the line, but on no account to engage if he found them in force. It had struck him that in advancing his infantry division through a mountain country where a column often cannot be perceived

\*[*Loustic*==“joker”; German, *lustig*. The term seems to have been first in use in the Swiss regiments of the later Monarchy (Littré).]

until one comes face to face with it at the turn of a gorge, he might, against his will, be drawn into a serious action against superior forces and compelled to execute a dangerous retreat. He resolved, therefore, to march cautiously, and to send forward to two or three leagues' distance a detachment which might explore the country, and, above all, make some prisoners from whom he could hope to get better information than the peasants were either able or willing to give. But feeling also that an infantry detachment would be in an awkward position if he sent it too far away, and that, moreover, men on foot would not be able to bring the desired intelligence quickly enough, the task of discovery and exploration was assigned to the fifty hussars. As the country was very much broken, he handed a map to our sergeant, and gave him full instructions, both in writing and *vivâ voce*, in presence of the detachment. Two hours before daylight he sent us off, repeating that we must march, without fail, until we touched the enemy's outposts, from which he was exceedingly anxious that we might be able to bring away some prisoners.

Canon's dispositions were perfect. He sent out a small advance-guard, covered his flank with scouts, and took, in short, all the precautions customary in guerilla warfare. Two leagues from camp we came to a large inn; our sergeant questioned the inn-keeper, and was informed that a good hour further on we should find an Austrian corps, the strength of which he could not state. He knew, however, that the leading regiment was one of very ill-conditioned hussars, who had maltreated sundry of the inhabitants. With this information we continued our march, but we had hardly gone a few hundred paces when Canon began to writhe on his horse, saying that he was in horrible pain, and that he could not go any farther, but must hand over the command of the detachment to Sergeant Pertelay the elder, the next in seniority to himself. Pertelay, however, remarked that, being an Alsatian, he could not read French, and consequently would be unable to make any use of the map or understand the general's written instructions, so he would not take command. All the other sergeants, old Bercheny men, refused on similar grounds; the corporals the same. In vain did I offer to read the general's instructions, and to point out our route on the map to any sergeant who would take the command; they repeated their refusal, and, to my great surprise, all these veterans answered: "Take command yourself; we will follow you and obey you implicitly." All the

detachment expressed the same desire, and as it was clear to me that if I declined we should not get any farther, and that the honour of the regiment would suffer—for in some way or other the order of General Séras would have to be executed or his division might perhaps come into serious trouble—I accepted the command after having asked Canon whether he felt fit to resume it. On this he renewed his complaints, left us, and returned to the inn. I must admit that I believed him to be really indisposed; but the men of the detachment, who knew him better, indulged in some very insulting banter with regard to him.

I may, I think, say without boasting that nature has allotted to me a fair share of courage; I will even add that there was a time when I enjoyed being in danger, as my thirteen wounds and some distinguished services prove, I think, sufficiently. When, therefore, I took command of the fifty men who had come under my orders in such unusual circumstances, a mere trooper as I was and seventeen years old, I resolved to show my comrades that if I had not yet much experience or military talent, I at least possessed pluck. So I resolutely put myself at their head and marched on in what we knew was the direction of the enemy. We had been some time on the way, when our scouts perceived a peasant trying to hide himself; they quickly captured him and brought him in. I questioned him; it appeared that he came from four or five leagues off, and averred that he had not met any Austrian troops. I was sure that he was lying through fear or through cunning, for we must be very near the enemy's cantonments. So I put on a big voice, and, trying to give my countenance a ferocious air, I cried: "What, you scamp! You have just come through a country occupied by a strong Austrian army corps, and you pretend to have seen nothing? You're a spy. Here, shoot him on the spot!" I ordered four hussars to dismount, giving them a sign that they were to do the man no harm. The man, seeing himself in the hands of troopers who had just cocked their carbines, was in such a fright that he swore to tell me all he knew. He was the servant of a convent, and was charged with a letter to some relations of the prior; he had been ordered if he met the French not to tell them where the Austrians were, but since he was forced to confess he informed us that at a distance of a league from us several of the enemy's regiments were quartered in the villages, while there were a hundred Barco Hussars in a hamlet which we saw close at

hand. When questioned as to the kind of guard which the hussars kept, the peasant replied that they had in advance of the houses a grand guard consisting of a dozen dismounted men posted in a garden surrounded by hedges, and that at the moment when he had come through the hamlet the rest of the hussars were getting ready to water their horses in a little pond at the further side of the houses.

Having got this information, I made my plans at once. I ordered the peasant to guide us, making a circuit, and promised to let him go as soon as we were at the other side of the hamlet. However, he was not willing to march, so I made one hussar take him by the collar while another held the muzzle of a pistol to his ear, and he had to do as he was told. He guided us very well; our movement was masked by high hedges. We turned the village successfully, and perceived at the edge of the little pond the Austrian squadron quietly watering their horses. All the troopers had their arms with them, as is customary with outposts, but the officers had neglected a very essential precaution, namely, to allow only a certain number of horses to be unbridled and to drink at once, and to send the sections into the water in succession, so that half may always be on the bank ready to repulse an enemy.

At five hundred paces from the little pond I let our guide go; he made off as fast as his legs would carry him; while I, sabre in hand, and forbidding my comrades to shout before they were engaged, dashed at full gallop on the enemy's hussars. They did not catch sight of us till the moment before we were at the edge of the pond. The banks were almost everywhere too steep for the horses to climb, the only practicable approach being at the spot where the villagers drew their water, where there was a pretty wide opening. But at this point more than a hundred troopers were massed, all having their bridles over their arms, and their carbines in the buckets—so perfectly at their ease that some were singing. Their surprise may be imagined when I first attacked them with a carbine-fire which killed several, wounded many, and knocked over a great number of horses. They were thrown into utter confusion, in spite of which the captain, rallying the men who were next the bank, forced his way out, and opened upon us a fire which, though ill-sustained, wounded two men. They then charged us; but Pertelay having slain the captain with a sabre-cut, they were rolled back into the pond. Some in their efforts to escape the fire reached the other

bank ; many lost their footing, and a good number of men and horses were drowned, while those of the Austrian troopers who got across from the other side of the pond, not being able to get their horses up the bank, abandoned them, and, clambering up by help of some trees, fled in disorder across the fields. At the sound of fighting the grand guard hurried up. We met them with the sabre and put them to flight also. Meanwhile some thirty of the enemy were still in the pond ; but fearing to urge their horses forward, when they saw that the only place where a landing could be effected was in our hands, they called out that they surrendered. I accepted, and as they came ashore made them lay down their arms. Most of the men and horses were wounded, but, wishing to take away a trophy of our victory, I chose seventeen troopers and the same number of horses who were not much injured, and placed them in the middle of my detachment. Then I left the other Barcos to themselves, and made off at a gallop, turning the village again.

I told Pertelay to take the two best mounted hussars and gallop forward to tell General Séras the result of our mission ; then I dressed my detachment carefully, and with the prisoners in the middle, well guarded, I trotted easily along the road to the inn.

What, meanwhile, had been passing at San Giacomo ? After waiting for some hours, General Séras, impatient for news, perceived from the heights some smoke on the horizon ; his aide-de-camp, laying his ear on a drum placed upon the ground, was able, by this common military artifice, to hear the sound of distant musketry. The general became uneasy, and, feeling sure that the cavalry detachment must be engaged with the enemy, took a regiment of infantry and went forward as far as the inn. There he saw a hussar's horse in the shed, hitched up to the rack ; Sergeant Canon's, in fact. The innkeeper appeared, and from him the general learnt that the sergeant in command of the hussars had got no farther than the inn, where he had been for some hours in the dining-room. The general entered, and found Canon asleep by the fire, with a huge ham, two empty bottles, and a cup of coffee in front of him. The poor sergeant was roused from his slumbers, and tried once more to plead the excuse of sudden indisposition. At that moment Pertelay and his two hussars galloped up, announcing our triumph, and our immediate return with seventeen prisoners. As in spite of this happy result of our expedition the general continued to heap reproaches on Canon, Pertelay said with rough ardour, " Do not

scold him, general ; he is such a coward that, if he had led us, we were bound to fail." This way of putting the matter naturally did not improve poor Canon's already awkward position ; the general put him under arrest, and degraded him on the spot, having his stripes torn off in presence of the regiment and the fifty hussars ; then, turning to me, who had just come up, and not knowing my name, he said : " You have performed admirably a duty which is usually entrusted only to officers. I am sorry that, as a general of division, I have not the power to appoint you sub-lieutenant ; I will, however, ask your promotion to that rank of the commander-in-chief. Meanwhile, I make you sergeant." He ordered his aide-de-camp to announce my promotion formally to the detachment. In order to do this, the aide-de-camp had to ask my name ; and then General Séras learned for the first time that I was the son of his colleague General Marbot.

The information which General Séras got from the prisoners having determined him to advance the next day, he sent orders to his division to descend from the heights of San Giacomo, and to bivouac that same night near the inn.

On the next and following days the division of General Séras had several little engagements with the enemy, during which I continued to command my fifty hussars, doing scout duty, to the general's satisfaction. In his report to General Championnet General Séras praised my conduct in stately terms, and reported it also to my father ; so that when, a few days later, I brought my detachment back to Savona, my father received me with every sign of affection. I was in raptures. When I rejoined our bivouac where the regiment was all again assembled, the troopers of my detachment who had got there before me related what we had done, always giving me the lion's share of the success ; so I was received with acclamation by officers and soldiers, as well as by my new comrades the non-commissioned officers, who presented me with my sergeant's stripes. That day I saw, for the first time, Pertelay junior, who was just back from Genoa, where he had been for some months on special service. I made great friends with this excellent man, and was sorry that I had not had him for mentor at the beginning of my career, for he gave me good advice, which made me quieter, and caused me to break off my connection with the " gang."

The commander-in-chief, having in view certain operations in the interior of Piedmont, in the direction of Cunico and Mondovi,



and being very short of cavalry, directed my father to send him the 1st Hussars. As a matter of fact, we could stay no longer at La Madona, for want of forage. I took leave of my father with much regret, and departed with the regiment. We followed the Corniche as far as Alberga, crossed the Apennines, in spite of the snow, and reached the fertile plains of Piedmont. The commander-in-chief fought a series of actions in the neighbourhood of Fossano, Novi, and Mondovi, with varying success.

In some of these fights I had occasion to see Brigadier-General Macard, a soldier of fortune, who had been carried by the whirlwind of the Revolution, almost without intermediate steps, from the rank of trumpet-major to that of general officer. He was an excellent specimen of the officers who were called into existence by chance and their own courage, and who, while they displayed a very genuine valour before the enemy, were none the less unfitted by their want of education for filling exalted positions. He was chiefly remarkable for a very quaint peculiarity. Of colossal size and extraordinary bravery, this singular person, when he was about to charge at the head of his troops, invariably cried, "Look here! I'm going to dress like a beast." Therewith he would take off his coat, his vest, his shirt, and keep on nothing except his plumed hat, his leather breeches, and his boots. Stripped thus to the waist, General Macard offered to view a chest almost as shaggy as a bear's, which gave him a very strange appearance. When he had once got on what he very truly called his beast's clothing, General Macard would dash forward recklessly, sabre in hand, and swearing like a pagan, on the enemy's cavalry. But he very seldom got at them, for at the sight of this giant, half-naked, hairy all over, and in such a strange outfit, who was hurling himself at them and uttering the most fearful yells, his opponents would bolt on all sides, scarcely knowing if they had a man to deal with or some strange wild animal.

The 1st Hussars took part in all the combats which at this time were fought in Piedmont, and went near to lose considerably in its encounters with the Austrian heavy cavalry. After several marches and counter-marches and a succession of small affairs almost every day, General Championnet, having brought up the centre and the left of his army between Cuneo and Mondovi on the 10th Nivose, attacked several divisions of the enemy. The fight took place in a plain intersected with low hills and clumps of wood. The 1st Hussars attached to General

Beaumont's brigade were placed at the extreme right of the French army. Our regiment, having suffered in the preceding affairs, could only put three squadrons in line that day instead of four ; but there remained some thirty men as supernumeraries, among them five non-commissioned officers, including myself and the brothers Pertelay. We were formed in two sections, commanded by the brave and intelligent Pertelay junior. General Beaumont, who knew his capacity, directed him to scout on the right flank of the army, giving him no special instruction, but orders to act as seemed best under the circumstances. We therefore left the regiment and went to search the country. Meanwhile a brisk combat took place between the two forces. After an hour we were falling back on our main body without having met anything on the flank, when Pertelay perceived in face of us, and consequently on the extreme left of the enemy's line, a battery of eight pieces, whose fire was doing much execution in the French ranks. With unpardonable imprudence this Austrian battery, with a view of getting better aim, had been brought up to a little plateau seven or eight hundred paces in advance of the infantry division to which it belonged. The commander of the artillery believed himself to be quite safe, thinking that, as the point which he occupied commanded the whole French line, if any force was detached to attack him, he would perceive it in time to fall back upon the Austrian line. He had not considered that a little clump of trees very near his position might conceal a body of French. It did not as yet contain any ; but Pertelay resolved to lead his section thither, and thence to charge upon the Austrian battery. To conceal his movement from the enemy's gunners he acted on the well-known principle that in war no one takes any notice of a solitary horseman. His design, as he explained it to us, was to send us individually round by a hollow road until, one after another, we should get behind the wood, which was to the left of the enemy's battery ; thence we were to make a dash upon it all at once without any fear of his shot, seeing that we should come up on the flank of the guns ; we should capture these, and bring them to the French army. The movement was executed without being perceived by the Austrian gunners. We went off one by one, and by a circuitous march reached the rear of the little wood, where we re-formed our section. Young Pertelay put himself at our head ; we passed through the wood and dashed, sabre in hand, on the enemy's battery, just as it was pouring a terrible fire

upon our troops. We sabied some of the gunners, the remainder hid under the ammunition wagons, where our swords could not reach them.

Pertelay's instructions were neither to kill nor wound the drivers, but to force them at the sword's point to push their horses on and to draw the guns as far as the French line. This order was satisfactorily carried out with regard to six pieces, the drivers remaining mounted and following our injunctions. But those of the other two guns, whether through fright or determination, dismounted from their horses. The hussars might pull the animals by the bridles as they would, they could not be got to move. The nearest battalions of the enemy were coming up at the double to support their battery; minutes were like hours for us. At length Pertelay, satisfied with having captured six guns, gave orders to abandon the others and to gallop in with those we had taken upon our own army. Prudent as this step was, it proved fatal to our gallant leader; for hardly had we begun our retreat when the gunners and their officers, emerging from below the ammunition wagons which had protected them from our swords, loaded with canister the two guns which we had not been able to carry off, and sent a hail of missiles into our backs.

You can imagine that thirty troopers, six guns harnessed each to six horses and driven by three drivers, marching in loose order, presents a wide surface, so nearly every missile told. We had two sergeants and several troopers killed or wounded, and one or two of the drivers; several horses, also, were disabled—so much so that the greater number of the teams were thrown into disorder and could get no farther. Pertelay, with the most perfect coolness, gave orders to cut the traces of the killed and disabled horses, to replace the killed and wounded drivers by hussars, and to go forward as fast as we could; but the few minutes which we lost in carrying out this order had been utilized by the commander of the Austrian battery. He let us have a second volley of canister, which caused us fresh losses; but our blood was up and we were resolved not to abandon the six guns which we had captured; we again succeeded in patching everything up as well as we could and in resuming our march. We were almost touching the French line, and were beyond the range of canister, when our enemy changed his projectile and sent two round-shots at us, one of which broke poor Pertelay's back.

Meanwhile, our attack on the Austrian battery and its result had been perceived by the French army and the generals ordered

the lines to advance. The enemy recoiled, which allowed the remains of our detachment to return to the ground where our poor comrades had fallen. Nearly a third of the number had been killed or wounded. At the beginning of the action there had been five non-commissioned officers; three had perished; there remained only the elder Pertelay and myself. He, poor fellow, had been wounded, and was in still greater pain of mind than of body, for he adored his brother; and we also keenly regretted him. While we were doing the last duties by him and removing the wounded, General Championnet came up with General Suchet, his chief of the staff. The commander-in-chief had seen the exploit of our battalion. He called us together beside the six guns which we had just taken and gave us the greatest praise for the courage with which we had succeeded in ridding the army of a battery that had been causing great damage. He added that in order to reward us for having thus saved a great number of lives and contributed to the success of the day, he wished to use the power given to him by a recent decree of the First Consul instituting arms of honour, and that he granted to the detachment three swords of honour and a sub-lieutenancy, authorizing us at the same time ourselves to name those who should receive these rewards. More keenly did we then regret the loss of the younger Pertelay, so well fitted to be an officer. The swords of honour, which three years later entitled their wearers to the Cross of the Legion of Honour, fell to the elder Pertelay, a corporal, and a trooper. Then came the naming of the one of us who was to have a sub-lieutenancy; all my comrades pronounced my name, and the commander-in-chief, remembering what General Séras had written to him about my conduct at San Giacomo, appointed me sub-lieutenant. I had only been sergeant a month. I was gazetted sub-lieutenant on the 10th Nivose, year 7 (December 31, 1799).

I was one of the last officers promoted by General Championnet. Being unable to hold his position in Piedmont in presence of a superior force, he was compelled to retreat across the Apennines and bring the army back into Liguria. Such was his grief at seeing a portion of his troops disbanded because he was no longer given the means of provisioning, that he died on the 25th of Nivose, fifteen days after he had made me an officer. My father, being the senior general of division, became provisionally commander-in-chief of the Army of Italy, with his headquarters at Nice. He returned thither, and with all haste sent

back into Provence what little cavalry still remained, for there was no longer any store of forage in Liguria. The 1st Hussars therefore returned to France, but my father kept me with him to act as aide-de-camp.

During our stay at Nice my father received orders from the Ministry of War to take up the command of the advanced guard of the Army of the Rhine, whither Colonel Ménard, as his chief of the staff, was to follow him. We were all very much satisfied with this new post, for the Army of Italy had become so demoralized by want of supplies that it seemed impossible to maintain our position in Liguria. Nor was my father sorry to get away from an army that was breaking up, and seemed about to tarnish its laurels by a shameful retreat, the result of which would be to throw it back behind the Var. He made ready, therefore, to depart as soon as General Masséna should arrive to replace him, and he sent M. Gault to Paris in order to buy maps and make the necessary preparations for our campaign on the Rhine. But destiny had decided otherwise, and my poor father's grave was marked out on the soil of Italy.

Masséna arrived to find but the shadow of an army. The troops, unpaid, almost unclad and unshod, were receiving only quarter rations, and dying of starvation or epidemic sickness, the result of privations. The hospitals were full, and medicine was lacking. Bands of soldiers, even whole regiments, were every day quitting their posts and making for the bridge over the Var. They forced their way into France, and scattered about Provence, declaring themselves ready to return to their duty if they were fed. The generals had no power against such a mass of misery; every day their discouragement grew, and they were all asking for leave or resigning on the ground of illness. Masséna had, indeed, hoped to be joined in Italy by several of the generals who had been taking part in the defeat of the Russians in Switzerland: among them by Soult, Oudinot, and Gazan. But none of these had as yet come, and the pressing need must be met.

Masséna, who was born at Turbia, a township in the little principality of Monaco, was the wildest of Italians. He was not acquainted with my father, but at first sight he judged him to be a man of magnanimous nature, above all things patriotic. In order to get him to stay, therefore, he approached him on his most sensitive side, appealing to his generosity and love of his country, and pointing out how much more to his honour it

would be to stay with the Army of Italy in its misfortunes than to go to the Rhine where things were prosperous. He offered, moreover, if my father would stay, to take upon himself all responsibility for his neglect of orders. My father was over-persuaded, and, not liking to leave the new commander-in-chief while things were in confusion, agreed to stay.

At the beginning of the following spring my father learnt that Masséna had given the command of the right wing to Soult, who had just arrived. At the same time he received orders to return to Savona and resume the command of his old division, the third. Though sorely hurt at this supersession by an officer much his junior, he complied with the new arrangements.

Meanwhile great events were preparing in Italy. Masséna had received reinforcements, and re-established some measure of order in the army. The famous campaign of 1800, which led to the siege of Genoa and the battle of Marengo, was about to open.

## CHAPTER V

*AS SOON* as the snow had melted on the mountains which lay between the two armies, the Austrians attacked. Their first efforts were directed against the third division of the right wing with the view of separating it from the centre and the left and hurling it back on Genoa. At the commencement of hostilities my father and Colonel Sacleux sent all non-combatants to that city, Colindo among the number. For my part, I was over head and ears in happiness. The animating sight of troops on the march, the clatter of artillery movements, roused the desire which is always in a young soldier's heart of taking part in warlike operations. I was far from suspecting how terrible a war this would be, and how costly to myself.

My father's division, briskly attacked by a superior force, held for two days the famous position of Cadibone and Montenotte; but finally, being in danger of having its flank turned, it was forced to retreat on Voltù, and then on Genoa, where, with the other two divisions of the right wing, it was shut up.

I could hear the generals who knew the state of the case deploring the necessity of separating ourselves from the centre and the left wing, but at that time I knew so little of the principles of war that it in no way affected me. I understood well enough

that we had been beaten, but as I had with my own hand captured an officer of the Barco Hussars and fastened his plume with much pride to the headstall of my horse, I felt as if this trophy gave me some resemblance to a knight of the Middle Ages coming home laden with the spoils of the infidels. My boyish vanity was soon brought down by a terrible catastrophe. During the retreat, just as my father was giving me an order to carry, he received a ball in the left leg, the leg in which he had before been wounded with the Army of the Pyrenees. The shock was so great that he would have fallen from his horse if he had not leant upon me. I got him away from the field of battle; his wound was dressed, and when I saw his blood flow I began to cry. He tried to soothe me, and said that a soldier ought to have stronger nerves. We carried him to Genoa and placed him in the Centurione Palace, which he had occupied in the previous winter. Our three divisions entered Genoa; the Austrians blockaded the place by land, and the English by sea.

The courage fails me to describe what the garrison and population of Genoa had to suffer during the two months which this memorable siege lasted. The ravages of famine, war, typhus were enormous. Out of 16,000 men, the garrison lost 10,000; every day seven or eight hundred corpses of the inhabitants, of every age, sex, and class, were picked up in the streets and buried in an immense trench filled with quicklime behind the church of Carignan. The number of victims reached more than 30,000, nearly all starved to death.

In order to realize to what extent the dearth of food was felt among the inhabitants, you must know that the old Genoese Government, to keep the population in check, had from time immemorial claimed a monopoly of grain, flour, and bread. The bread was baked in an immense building guarded by cannon and soldiers, so that whenever the Doge or the Senate wished to prevent or punish a revolt they had only to close the state bakeries and subdue the people by famine. Although at the time of which I speak the Genoese Constitution had undergone much change, and the aristocracy had lost nearly all its authority, there still was not a single private bakehouse, and the old custom of making the bread in the state ovens continued. Well, these public ovens, which habitually provided food for a population of more than 120,000 souls, remained closed for forty-five days out of the sixty which the siege lasted. Rich no more than poor had

the means of obtaining bread; the small quantity of dried vegetables and rice which was in the hands of the dealers had been bought up at enormous prices at the very beginning of the siege. The troops alone received a miserable ration of a quarter of a pound of horseflesh and a quarter of a pound of what was called bread—a horrible compound of damaged flour, sawdust, starch, hair powder, oatmeal, linseed, rancid nuts, and other nasty substances, to which a little solidity was given by the admixture of a small portion of cocoa. Each loaf, moreover, was held together by little bits of wood, without which it would have fallen to powder. General Thiébault in his journal of the siege compares this bread to peat mingled with oil.

For five-and-forty days neither bread nor meat was publicly sold; the richest inhabitants were able, but only during the first part of the siege, to obtain a little codfish, figs, and other dried provisions, as well as some sugar. Oil, wine, and salt never failed; but of what use are these without solid food? All the dogs and cats in the town were eaten; rats fetched a high price. At length the misery grew so terrible that whenever the French troops made a sortie crowds followed them outside the gates, and there rich and poor, women, children, and old men, set to work to cut grass, nettles, and leaves, which they then boiled with salt. The Genoese Government had the grass which grew on the ramparts mown, and afterwards cooked in the public squares and distributed to the sick people who were not strong enough to get this coarse food and cook it themselves. Our troops used to boil nettles and all kinds of plants with their horseflesh; the richest and most eminent families envied them their meat, disgusting as it was—for nearly all the horses were ill for want of forage, and the flesh even of those which had died of consumption was distributed.

It may seem surprising that Masséna should have clung so obstinately to the defence of a place of which he could maintain the garrison with difficulty, and the population not at all. But Genoa weighed heavily just then in the balance of the fate of France. Our army was cut in two; the left and centre had retired behind the Var; while Masséna, shut up in Genoa, detained a portion of the Austrian army before that place, and thus prevented it from invading Provence in full force. Masséna knew that at Dijon, at Lyons, and at Geneva the First Consul was collecting a reserve army with which he proposed to cross the Alps by the Great St. Bernard, to enter Italy, and to surprise



the Austrians by falling on their rear while they were occupied with the siege of Genoa. It was, therefore, of immense importance to us to hold that town as long as possible. The First Consul had given orders to that effect, and his foresight was justified by events. But let me return to what befell me in the siege.

On learning that my father had been brought wounded into Genoa, Colindo Trepano hastened to his bedside, and we met again there. He helped me in the most affectionate way to tend the sick man; and I was the more grateful to him that in the midst of our troubles my father had no one with him. All staff officers had received orders to place themselves at the service of the commander-in-chief. Very soon provisions were no longer allowed to our servants: and they were compelled to take a musket and enroll themselves among the combatants, in order to claim the wretched ration which was distributed to the soldiers. The only exceptions were made in favour of a young valet named Oudin and a young groom who looked after our horses; but Oudin left us on learning that my father had been seized with typhus. This terrible disorder, like the plague, with which it has much affinity, always attacks the wounded and those who are already ill. My father took it; and just when he most needed care he had no one with him but myself, Colindo, and the groom Bastide. We carried out the doctor's prescriptions to the best of our power, and got no sleep day or night, being incessantly occupied in rubbing my father with camphorated oil, and in changing bedclothes and bandages. He could take nothing but broth, and to make this we had only bad horseflesh.

The noise of the cannonade and the cries of the dying reached my father's room, and agitated him extremely. He kept regretting that he could not be at the head of his division; and his mental state made his bodily condition worse. From day to day his illness grew more serious, and he became visibly weaker. Colindo and I never left him for an instant. At last, one night, while I was kneeling by his bedside bathing his wound, he spoke to me with his mind perfectly clear. Then, feeling his end approaching, he laid his hand on my head, stroked it caressingly, and said: "Poor child! what is to become of you with no one to look after you, in the midst of the horrors of this terrible siege!" He murmured a few words, among which I made out my mother's name, dropped his arms, and closed his eyes.

Young as I was, and short as had been my service, I had seen

plenty of men die in the field, and still more in the streets of Genoa ; but these had fallen in the open air and in their clothes. Very different is the sight of a man dying in bed ; and this last sad spectacle I had never yet witnessed. I thought, therefore, that my father had dropped off to sleep. Colindo, who understood the truth, had not the heart to tell me, and I was only undeceived some hours later, when M. Lachèze came in, and I saw him draw the sheet over my father's face, saying, " A terrible loss for his family and his friends." Then, for the first time, I realized my full misfortune. My grief was so heartrending that it even touched the commander-in-chief, Masséna, who was not very easily moved, especially in circumstances like the present, where firmness was so much required. The critical position of affairs caused him to take in regard to me a step which I thought atrocious, though if I ever commanded in a besieged town I should do the same myself. In order to avoid anything which might weaken the *moral* of the troops Masséna had forbidden all funeral processions. He knew that I was unwilling to quit the mortal remains of my dear father, and suspected that my intention was to accompany them to the grave. Fearing the effect on the troops of seeing a young officer, little more than a child, sobbing behind the bier of his father, a general of division, and a victim of this terrible war, Masséna came the next morning before daybreak into the room where my father was lying, and, taking me by the hand, led me under some pretext into a distant apartment. Meanwhile, at his orders, twelve grenadiers, accompanied only by Colonel Sacleux and another officer, took up the bier in silence and carried it off to the temporary grave on the ramparts towards the sea. Not till this sad ceremony was over did Masséna tell me what had been done, explaining the motives of his decision. I cannot express the despair into which I was thrown. It seemed to me that by this removal of my father's body without the last cares from me I had lost him a second time. It was no use complaining, and there was nothing more for me to do but to go and pay at his grave.

Scarcely a week had passed since I had lost my father when General Masséna, who wanted a great many officers about him, for he got some killed or wounded almost every day, sent me orders to come and act as his aide-de-camp. I obeyed, and all day long attended the commander-in-chief during the fighting. When I was not kept at head-quarters I went home, and when night came Colindo and I, passing through dying and dead,

through women and children who were lying about the streets, used to go and pray at my father's tomb.

I can only speak very briefly of the operations of the siege, or rather blockade, which we sustained. At this period the fortifications of Genoa consisted on the land side merely of a wall flanked with towers; but what rendered the place capable of a good defence was the fact of its being surrounded at a short distance by hills whose summits and slopes were covered with forts and redoubts. The Austrians were always attacking these positions; as soon as they carried one we marched to retake it; the next day they tried again to get possession of it. If they succeeded we went to drive them out afresh—in short, it was a perpetual see-saw with varying chances, but on the whole we ended by remaining masters of the ground. These fights were often very brisk; in one of them General Soult who was Masséna's right-hand man, was climbing Monte Corona at the head of his columns to recapture the fort of the same name which we had lost the day before, when a bullet smashed his knee just as the enemy, far outnumbering us, were charging down from the top of the hill. It was impossible with the few troops which we had at this point to resist such a torrent, and we had to beat a retreat. The soldiers carried Soult for some time on their muskets, but the intolerable pain compelled him to order them to set him down at the foot of a tree, where his brother and one of his aides-de-camp remained alone with him to defend him from the fury of the first of the enemy who should reach him. Luckily, among these were some officers, who treated their illustrious prisoner with much respect. The capture of General Soult having stimulated the ardour of the Austrians, they drove us very smartly back to the wall, and were preparing to assault this, when a tremendous storm darkened the blue sky which we had had since the beginning of the siege. The rain fell in torrents. The Austrians halted, and the greater number of them sought shelter in cottages or under trees. Then Masséna, whose principal merit in war lay in profiting by all sorts of unforeseen circumstances, addressed his soldiers, rekindled their ardour, and, supporting them with troops brought up from the town, ordered a bayonet-charge, and led them, while the storm was at its height, against the Austrians, who, victorious so far, were taken aback by this audacity, and retired in disorder. Masséna pursued with such vigour that he cut off a force of 3,000 grenadiers, who laid down their arms.

Of my own perils during the siege I will confine myself to recounting the two principal. I have already said that the Austrians and the English took it in turns to keep us constantly on the alert. The former attacked us at daybreak on the land-side, fought us all day long, and returned to rest at night. During the night Lord Keith's fleet came and bombarded us, trying under cover of darkness to get possession of the port, and thus forcing the garrison to watch that side most carefully, and preventing them from getting the least rest. One night when the bombardment was more than ordinarily violent, Masséna, having been informed that, by the help of some Bengal lights which had been fired on the beach, many English craft, laden with troops, could be seen advancing towards the moles, mounted with all his staff and his regular escort of guides. We were in all some 150 to 200 horsemen. As we passed a little square named the Campetto, the commander-in-chief halted to speak to an officer who was returning from the port. All were thronging round him, when a cry was heard, "Look out ! a shell !" We all looked up and beheld a vast mass of red-hot iron descending on the group of men and horses who were packed in the narrow space. I happened to be close to the wall of a great house, above the door of which was a marble balcony. I urged my horse under this and several of my neighbours did the same. Precisely on this balcony the shell dropped : it smashed it to pieces, bounded off on to the pavement, and burst with a tremendous noise in the middle of the square, which for a moment was lighted up by the flash and then relapsed into deeper darkness. We thought the loss would have been great, the profound silence was broken by the voice of General Masséna asking if anyone was wounded ; there was no answer, for by a really miraculous chance not one of the fragments of the shell had struck a man or a horse in the crowd. As for those who, like myself, were under the balcony, they were covered with dust and fragments of building materials, but no one was wounded.

I have said that as a rule the English only bombarded us at night ; but one day when they were celebrating some festival or other, their fleet, dressed with flags, sailed up to the town in the middle of the day, and amused itself by showering projectiles on us. The one of our batteries which was in the best position for replying to this fire was near the mole, on a great tower-like bastion called the Lantern. The commander-in-chief ordered me to carry to the officer commanding this battery instructions

to take good aim before firing, and to let all his fire converge upon an English brig which had impudently anchored a short distance from the Lantern. Our gunners aimed so well that one of our 500-lb. shells dropped on the English brig, smashing through from deck to keel and sinking it instantly.\* This enraged the English admiral so much that he ordered all his gunboats to advance upon the Lantern, on which they opened a furious fire.

The obstinate courage with which Masséna had held Genoa had important consequences. Major Fianceschi, sent by him to the First Consul, succeeded, both going and returning, in passing through the enemy's fleet at night undetected. He was back at Genoa on the 6th Prairial with the news that he had left Bonaparte descending from the Great St. Bernard at the head of his reserve force. Field-marshal Melas was so convinced of the impossibility of bringing such an army across the Alps, that while the force under General Ott was blockading us he had gone with the rest of his army to attack General Suchet on the Var, fifty leagues away, with the intention of invading Provence. This allowed the First Consul to enter Italy unopposed, so that the army of reserve was at Milan before the Austrians had begun to believe in its existence. Thus the resistance of Genoa had effected a powerful diversion in aid of France. Once in Italy, Bonaparte's first wish would have been to succour the valiant garrison of that town; but in order to do this he had to wait until his whole force was assembled, and the passage of the Alps offered great difficulties to the artillery and commissariat wagons. This delay allowed time for Melas to hasten up with the bulk of his forces from Nice to oppose the First Consul, who was thus unable to continue his march upon Genoa except by previously defeating the Austrian army.

But while Bonaparte and Melas were marching and counter-marching in Piedmont and the province of Milan previously to the battle which was to decide the fate of Italy and France, the garrison of Genoa was at the last gasp. Typhus was doing frightful execution; the hospitals were charnel-houses; the measure of misery was full. Nearly all the horses had been eaten, and the half-pound of wretched food, which was all that the troops had for some time received, was never secure for one day in advance.

\* [In the list given by James, of British ships lost during 1800, there is no mention of any at Genoa. The story told here bears a certain resemblance to that of the apocryphal destruction of another English brig off Boulogne. See p. 71.]

*Absolutely nothing* was left when, on the 15th Prairial, the commander-in-chief summoned all the generals and colonels, and announced that he had determined to take such sound men as remained and try to cut his way through and reach Leghorn. The officers, however, declared with one voice that the troops were utterly unfit to fight, even to march, without a sufficient meal to sustain their strength before starting. The stores were completely exhausted.

For more than a month past the English admiral and General Ott had been proposing an interview, but Masséna had always refused. Now, however, he was constrained by the circumstances to send them word that he agreed to it. The meeting took place in a little chapel which stands on the bridge of Conegliano, and was situated between the sea and the French and Austrian outposts. The French, Austrian, and English staffs took their stand at the ends of the bridge. I was present at this most interesting scene. The enemy's commander showed special marks of esteem and respect to Masséna. Although the conditions which he required were unfavourable to them, Lord Keith said repeatedly: "General, your defence has been so heroic that we can refuse you nothing." It was agreed, therefore, that the garrison should not be prisoners, should retain their arms, and should proceed to Nice. As soon as they had reached that town they were free to take part again in hostilities.

Masséna well understood how important it was that the keen desire which the First Consul must be feeling to come to the aid of Genoa should not lead him into any movement which might compromise his safety. He demanded, therefore, that the conditions should include a safe-conduct through the Austrian army for two officers who were to bear to him the news of the evacuation of the place by the French troops. General Ott objected, having in view a speedy departure to join Melas with 25,000 envoys of the blockading force, and he did not wish that warning of this should be brought to the First Consul by Masséna's troops. But Lord Keith overruled this objection. The treaty was on the point of being signed when sounds as of distant cannon were heard far away among the mountains. Masséna put down his pen, exclaiming, "There comes the First Consul with his army!" The hostile generals were amazed; but after waiting some time it became evident that the sound was that of thunder, and Masséna decided to sign. On the 16th Prairial the Austrians took possession of Genoa, after a siege of just two months.

So important did our commander-in-chief deem it that the

First Consul should have timely notice of the treaty just concluded, that he had asked for a safe-conduct for two aides-de-camp, in order that if one fell ill the other might take on the despatch. It was as well that the officer to whom the duty was entrusted should be able to speak Italian, so Masséna selected for it Major Graziani, a Piedmontese or Roman in the French service. With his wonted excess of suspicion, however, fearing that one who was not a Frenchman might be tampered with by the Austrians and induced to delay, he attached me to him, with special instructions to urge him forward till we fell in with the First Consul. We started on the 16th Prairial, and came up with Bonaparte the next evening at Milan.

General Bonaparte spoke with much sympathy of my recent loss, and promised if I behaved well to act a father's part to me. He kept his word. He was never tired of questioning M. Graziani and me both as to what had happened at Genoa and about the strength and direction of the Austrian forces which we had passed on our way to Milan. He kept us near him, and lent us horses from his stable. We had performed the journey on post-mules. We accompanied him to Montebello, and on to the battlefield of Marengo, where we were his orderly officers. I will not enter into the details of this memorable fight, in which no harm befell me. As Major Graziani died in 1812, I am the only French officer who was present both at the siege of Genoa and at the battle of Marengo.

After the battle I returned to Genoa, which the Austrians were compelled, by the treaty made as a result of our victory, to evacuate. I met again Colindo and Major R——, visited the grave of my father, and we embarked on board a French brig, which brought us to Nice in twenty-four hours. A few days later a Leghorn vessel brought Colindo's mother, who came to look after her son. This excellent young man and I had had our friendship cemented by the severe trials which we had gone through together; but our destinies lay apart, and with keen regret we had to separate.

As I mentioned above, Masséna's aide-de-camp, Franceschi, bearing despatches to the First Consul, had passed through the English fleet at night and succeeded in reaching France. He brought the news of my father's death. On receiving this my mother had had administrators of his estate\* appointed, and they

\* [Probably the nearest English approach to *conseil de tutelle*. These, however, would also have personal authority over the children.]

had sent orders to old Spire, who had remained at Nice with my father's travelling outfit, to sell everything and return at once to Paris. This having been done, I had nothing to keep me on the banks of the Var, and was eager to rejoin my mother—not an easy thing to do, for there were few public conveyances then.

I will not attempt to recount my meeting with my mother and brothers. Some scenes can be realized by everyone who has a heart, but are too sad to describe. Adolphe was not at Paris, but at Rennes, with Bernadotte, then commanding the Army of the West. My mother had a rather pretty house at Carrière, near the forest of St. Germain. I passed two months there with her, my uncle Canrobert, who had come back from abroad, and an old Knight of Malta, M. d'Estresse, a former friend of my father's; my young brother and M. Gault came now and then to visit us.

## CHAPTER VI

*THE AUTUMN* of 1800 was drawing to an end. My mother returned to Paris, my young brothers to school, and I received orders to go to Rennes and join the commander-in-chief—Bernadotte. He had been the closest friend of my father, who had rendered him services of all kinds in various circumstances. To evince his gratitude, Bernadotte had written to me that he had kept an aide-de-camp's place vacant for me. My father had insisted on my brother's continuing the studies necessary for entry into the Ecole Polytechnique, so that when we lost our father Adolphe was not yet in the army. When, however, he heard the sad news, he was unable to bear the thought that while his younger brother was already an officer who had seen service he was still on the form. The nomination of the officers was to be in the hands of General Lefebvre, who, as you will remember, had succeeded my father in the command of the Paris division. Lefebvre eagerly seized the opportunity to be of service to the son of one of his old comrades who had died in the service of his country, so he appointed my brother a sub-lieutenant in the new corps. So far it was all right, but, instead of going to join his company, and without even waiting my return from Genoa, Adolphe hurried off to Rennes to join Bernadotte, who, without further consideration, gave the post to the brother who arrived first, as if it was a question of a prize for a race. In this way,



when I reached Rennes and joined the staff of the Army of the West, I learnt that my brother had received the commission of regular aide-de-camp to the chief, and that I was only a supernumerary, that is, provisional aide-de-camp. I was much disappointed. In vain did Bernadotte assure me that he would obtain leave to increase the number of his aides-de-camp. I had no hope of it, and I understood that before long I should have to go elsewhere. I have never approved of two brothers serving together on the same staff or in the same regiment, because they always stand in each other's way. It will be seen that this happened frequently in the course of our career.

In the winter of 1800 Portugal, supported by England, declared war against Spain, and the French Government resolved to take the side of the latter Power. Consequently troops were sent to Bayonne and Bordeaux, and at Tours were assembled the grenadier companies of numerous regiments quartered about Brittany and Vendée. This select force, 7,000 to 8,000 men strong, was intended to form the reserve of the so-called Army of Portugal, of which Bernadotte was to have the command. He therefore had to move his head-quarters to Tours, whither were sent his horses and his outfit, as also those of the officers attached to his person. The general, however, in order both to receive his last orders from the Consul and to take Madame Bernadotte back, had to go to Paris. As in such cases it is usual during the absence of the general for his staff officers to have leave to go and take farewell of their families, it was decided that all the regular aides-de-camp might go to Paris, and that the supernumeraries should accompany the baggage to Tours in order to look after the domestics and pay them every month, and to arrange with the commissaries for the distribution of forage and the allotment of quarters for this large number of men and horses. This disagreeable duty therefore fell upon Lieutenant Maurin and myself. On horseback and in the depth of winter and in horrible weather, we did the eight long days of march which separate Rennes from Tours; and there we had all sorts of trouble in installing the head-quarters. We were told that it would remain there for a fortnight at most, but we remained there six long months, horribly bored, our comrades the while enjoying themselves in the capital. This was a foretaste of the annoyances which the position of supernumerary aide-de-camp caused me. Thus ended the year 1800, during which I had undergone so much pain both of mind and body.

At that time there was very good society at Tours, and much amusement going on, but although I received many invitations I accepted none. The task of attending to the oversight of a great number of men and horses fortunately kept me well occupied; otherwise the isolation in which I lived would have been unendurable. The horses belonging to the commander-in-chief and to the officers of his staff were more than eighty in number, and all were at my disposal. I took two or three of them every day and made long excursions in the neighbourhood of Tours. These, solitary as they were, had a great charm for me, and afforded me a tranquil distraction.

Meanwhile the First Consul had changed his arrangements with regard to the Army of Portugal. He entrusted the command of it to his brother-in-law, General Leclerc, and retained Bernadotte with the Army of the West. Consequently, when my brother and the other aides-de-camp had rejoined the staff at Tours they received orders almost directly to return to Brittany and remove to Brest, whither the general was about to proceed. It is a long journey, especially when one travels by fixed marches; but it was the fine time of year, we were young, and there were plenty of us, so the way was merry enough. Being unable to ride, owing to an injury which I had accidentally received in the hip, I went in one of the general's carriages. Him we found at Brest.

In the harbour of Brest were not only a great number of French vessels, but also a Spanish fleet, commanded by Admiral Gravina. He was killed afterwards at Trafalgar, where the combined fleets of France and Spain fought that of England under the celebrated Nelson, who also lost his life in the engagement. At the time of our arrival at Brest, the fleets were intended to take General Bernadotte and a strong expeditionary force of French and Spaniards over to Ireland. This plan was never carried out, but in the meantime the presence of so many officers naval and military, kept the town of Brest very lively.

We were very well off at Brest, till the commander-in-chief thought it wiser to retransfer the head-quarters to Rennes, a dull town, but more central for his district. No sooner had we got settled there than what I had foreseen happened. The First Consul reduced the number of aides-de-camp which the general might keep on his staff. He was to have only one colonel and five officers of lower rank, no more *provisional* aides-de-camp. Accordingly I received notice that I was to be attached to a

light cavalry regiment. I could have made up my mind to it well enough if it had been to return to the 1st Hussars, where I was known, and of which I still wore the uniform; but it was more than a year since I had left the regiment, and the colonel had filled up my place. The Minister sent me a commission in the 25th Mounted Chasseurs, which had just entered Spain and was marching on the Portuguese frontier, in the direction of Salamanca and Zamora. I felt keenly the injury that Bernadotte had done me in misleading me by false promises; for otherwise I should either have been a regular member of Masséna's staff in Italy, or have resumed my place in the 1st Hussars. Discontented as I was, I was bound to obey orders; and my first impulse of ill-humour past—they pass quickly at that age—I was in a hurry to be on the road and get away from the general against whom I had a grievance.

The chasseurs at that period wore the hussar-jacket, except that it was green; but none the less I was foolish enough to shed a few tears when I had to abandon the Bercheny uniform and give up the name of hussar for that of chasseur. I took leave pretty coldly of Bernadotte. He gave me letters of introduction to Lucien Bonaparte, then ambassador at Madrid, and to General Leclerc, commanding the Army of Portugal.

On the day of my departure all the aides-de-camp gave me a breakfast, and I set out with a heavy heart. Two days' journey brought me to Nantes, tired to death, with much pain in my side, and convinced that I should never have endurance enough to ride the 450 leagues which lay between me and the frontier of Portugal. As good luck would have it, at Nantes, in the house of one of my schoolfellows of Sorèze, I found a Spanish officer, by name Don Rafael, who was going to the dépôt of his regiment in Estremadura. We arranged that I should show him the way as far as the Pyrenees, and that from that point he should assume the direction of the journey so far as our ways lay together.

Before crossing the Pyrenees I had to present myself to the general commanding at Bayonne, whose name was Ducos; an excellent man, who had served under my father. He took an interest in me, and was anxious that I should delay entering Spain for a few days, as he had just learnt that a band of brigands had been rifling some travellers not far from the frontier.

They had just treated an English family in this fashion; and General Ducos, wishing to spare us the inconvenience of being plundered, had intended to delay our departure. Don Rafael,

however, remarked that he knew the ways of Spanish brigands well enough to be certain that the safest time to travel through a given district was when the bands had just committed an offence against the law, because at such times they get out of the way for a while. So the general sanctioned our departure.

At the time of which I am speaking carriage-horses were quite unknown in Spain, all carriages, even those of the king, being drawn by mules. Coaches there were none, and for posting there were only saddle-horses, so that the very greatest nobles who had their own carriages were compelled when they travelled to hire mules and go by short day's journeys. Well-to-do travellers hired carriages which did not do more than ten leagues in the day; the poorer people joined one of the caravans of donkey-drivers who transported goods after the fashion of our carriers; but nobody travelled alone, partly by reason of the highwaymen, but also for the low esteem in which this mode of travelling was held. After our arrival at Bayonne, Don Rafael, who now had the direction of our journey, told me that, as we were neither sufficiently great people to hire a carriage and a team of mules for ourselves, nor paupers enough to go with the ass-drivers, the only alternative left was to ride post or to take places in a hired carriage. Riding post, which I have since often done, did not suit me, because it was impossible to take our baggage with us; it was decided, then, that we had to go by public carriage.

We started in an immense old coach, three places in which were occupied by an inhabitant of Cadiz with his wife and daughter. A prior of Benedictines from the University of Salamanca made up the tale of passengers. Everything in this journey was naturally new to me. To begin with, the team astonished me much. It consisted of six splendid mules, of which, to my great surprise, the wheelers alone had reins and bridles. The other four went free, guided by the voice of the driver and his *zagal*, or teamster. The former, perched in lordly style on a huge box, gave his orders gravely to the *zagal*, who, nimble as a squirrel, would often do more than a league on foot, running beside the mules at full trot; then in the twinkling of an eye he would climb on to the box beside his master, only to get down and get up again, and that twenty times during the journey. He would run round the carriage and the team to make sure that nothing was out of place, and as he performed this exercise he was continually singing to encourage his mules,

each of which he would call by her name ; he never struck them, his voice being sufficient to stimulate any one who was slackening her pace.

The performances, and especially the songs, of this man were a great amusement to me. I took also much interest in the conversation that went on in the carriage ; for though I spoke no Spanish, what I knew of Latin and Italian made me able to understand my companions, and I answered them in French, which they understood fairly well. The five Spaniards—even the two ladies and the monk—soon lighted up their cigars. I regretted that I had not yet acquired the habit of smoking. We were all in good humour ; Don Rafael, the ladies, and even the stout Benedictine used to sing in chorus. We generally started betimes, and used to stop from one to three to dine, rest the mules, and let the heat of the day go by. During this we slept, or, as the Spaniards call it, made our *siesta*. Then we went on to our sleeping-place. The meals were plentiful enough, but the flavour of the Spanish cookery seemed to me at first horrible ; however, I ended by getting used to it, but I never could reconcile myself to the dreadful beds which were offered to us in the *posadas*, or inns. They were truly disgusting, as Don Rafael, who had just passed a year in France, was compelled to admit. To avoid this inconvenience, on the first day of entering Spain I asked to sleep on a truss of straw. Unhappily, I learnt that a truss of straw was a thing unknown in this country, since, instead of threshing the sheaves, they are trampled out by mules, whereby the straw is reduced to small pieces of hardly more than half a finger's length. I had the brilliant idea of getting a great sack filled with this chopped straw ; then, placing it in a barn, I slept on it wrapped in my cloak, and thus escaped the vermin with which the beds and the rooms were infested. In the morning I emptied my sack and placed it in the carriage, and in this fashion, by getting it filled at each sleeping-place I had a clean mattress. My invention was imitated by Don Rafael.

We traversed the mountainous provinces of Navarre, Biscay, and Alava ; then we crossed the Ebro and entered the vast plains of Castile. We saw Burgos and Valladolid, and after fifteen days' journey reached Salamanca. There I parted, not without regret, from my pleasant travelling-companion Don Rafael, whom I was to meet again later on in the same regions during the War of Independence. General Leclerc was at Salamanca ; he received me most kindly, and even proposed that I should

stay with him as supernumerary aide-de-camp ; but my recent experience had shown me that, although service on the staff offers more advantages in the way of liberty than service with the regiment, this is only when one holds the position of a regular aide-de-camp, otherwise all the tiresome duties fall to your share, and you have only a very uncertain position. I refused, therefore, the favour which the commander-in-chief offered me, and asked leave to do duty with my regiment. It was just as well that I acted in this way, for in the following year the general, having got the command of the expedition to San Domingo, took with him a lieutenant who had accepted the place which I refused, and all the staff officers, as well as the general, died of the yellow fever.

I found the 25th Chasseurs at Salamanca. The colonel, M. Moreau, a very kind old officer, and my new comrades received me well, and in a few days I was on the best terms with them all. I was introduced to the society of the town ; for at that time the position of a Frenchman in Spain was pleasant enough, and quite unlike what it afterwards became. In fact, in 1801 we were allies of the Spaniards ; we came to fight on their behalf against the Portuguese and English, and so they treated us as friends.

The 15,000 French sent into the Peninsula, under General Leclerc, formed the right wing of the Spanish grand army, commanded by the Prince of the Peace, under whose orders they therefore were. He came one day to review us. This favourite of the Queen of Spain was at that time practically king. He seemed to me very well satisfied with his personal appearance, although he was small of stature and of no distinction ; still he lacked neither elegance nor ability. He ordered our division forward, and my regiment went to Toro, and then to Zamora. At first I regretted Salamanca, but we were very well off in the other towns, and especially at Zamora. There I lodged with a rich merchant, whose house had a splendid garden, where a numerous company used to meet in the evening for music and conversation, amid shrubberies of pomegranates, myrtles and lemon-trees. It is hard to appreciate thoroughly the beauties of nature unless one knows these delicious nights of Southern lands.

Nevertheless, we had to tear ourselves from this agreeable life to go and attack the Portuguese. We invaded their territory, and got the best of them in several trifling affairs. The French division marched upon Viseu, while the Spanish army descended

the Tagus and entered the Alentejo. We counted on shortly entering Lisbon as conquerors; but the Prince of the Peace, who had without due consideration summoned the troops into the Peninsula, became, with no more consideration, alarmed at their presence, and in order to get rid of them concluded the treaty of peace with Portugal without the knowledge of the First Consul. He was clever enough to get this ratified by the French ambassador Lucien Bonaparte, which irritated the First Consul considerably, and from that day dated the enmity of the two brothers. The French troops remained some months longer in Portugal, till the beginning of 1802. We then returned to Spain, and revisited our pleasant garrisons of Zamora, Toro, and Salamanca, where we had always been so well received. After more than a month's march we recrossed the Bidassoa, and though my stay in Spain had given me nothing but satisfaction, I was pleased to see France again.

## CHAPTER VII

*AT THAT* time each regiment managed its own remounts, and our colonel had been authorized to buy some sixty horses. He hoped to pick them up by degrees in French Navarre, on the way to Toulouse, where we were to be in garrison. But for my sins we arrived at Bayonne on the very day of the local fair. There were numbers of horse-dealers there, and the colonel arranged with one of them to furnish at once the horses required. They could not be paid for in ready money, because the funds of which we had been advised by the Minister would not arrive for eight days. Accordingly the colonel ordered that an officer should remain at Bayonne to receive the money and pay the dealer; and this duty, which I did not bless, fell to me. There were several of my old schoolfellows at Bayonne, and with them I passed the time pleasantly. The funds came; I received them and paid, and, my cares being at an end, prepared to rejoin my regiment.

On reaching Toulouse I was going to set about finding a lodging, but the colonel told me that he had taken me a room in the house of an old doctor, a friend of his, named M. Merlhes. I shall never forget his name, for no one could have been kinder than were this venerable man and his numerous family. During

the fortnight that I stayed with them I was treated rather as a child of the house than as a lodger.

The regiment was strong and well mounted ; we exercised very often, and I took much interest in it, though I got occasional punishments over it from Major Blancheville. He was an excellent officer of long standing in the service, and from him I learnt to do my duty with precision, and in this respect I owe much to him. Before the Revolution he had been adjutant in the Lunéville gendarmes, and had a thorough knowledge of his profession. He took a great interest in such young officers as were capable of learning and forced them, whether they would or not, to study their business. As for the others—the block-heads as he called them—he was contented to shrug his shoulders when they did not know their theory or blundered in their drill ; but he never punished them for that. There were three of us sub-lieutenants whom he had distinguished ; these were MM. Gavaille, Demonts, and myself. With us he never overlooked an inaccurate word of command, and would put us under arrest for the smallest faults. As he was very good-natured off duty, we ventured to ask him why he reserved his severity for us. He replied, “Do you think I am such a fool as to waste my time in soaping a negro ? MM. ——— and ——— are too old, and have not sufficient abilities for me to waste my time in completing their education. As for you, you have got all the necessary materials for success ; you only want to work, and work you shall.” I never forgot this answer, which I turned to account when I was colonel. Old Blancheville undoubtedly had drawn the horoscope of the three sub-lieutenants correctly, for Gavaille became lieutenant-colonel, Demonts general of brigade, and I lieutenant-general.

When I came to Toulouse I exchanged the horse which I had bought in Spain for a beautiful Navarrese. The prefect having got up some races on the occasion of some festivity or other, Gavaille, who was devoted to races, had entered my horse. One day, when I was practising him on the training-ground, the circle being small, he got puzzled with the sharpness of the curve, and, galloping straight forward with the speed of an arrow, he ran his chest against the sharp angle of a garden wall, and fell stone-dead. My comrades thought I was killed, or at least severely wounded ; but by a perfectly miraculous piece of luck, I had not the smallest scratch. When they picked me up, and I saw my poor horse lying motionless, I felt deep grief. I returned,



very melancholy, to my quarters, seeing that I should be forced to remount myself, and for that purpose to ask my mother, who was by no means in affluence, for some more money.

When my request for a new horse was brought before the trustees, General Bernadotte, who was one of them, burst out laughing, saying that it was an excellent trick, and the pretext very well chosen—in fact, giving them to understand that my request was what is nowadays called a “plant.” But, luckily, my request was backed up by a certificate from my colonel, and M. Defermon added that he believed me incapable of trying to get money by a trick. He was quite right; for though I only had an allowance of 600 francs, while my pay was only ninety-five francs a month, with twelve francs in addition for lodging, I never was a sou in debt—I always had a dread of it.

I bought a new horse—not as good as the Navarrese, but the general inspection, which the First Consul had re-established, was drawing near, and I was obliged to be mounted without delay; all the more that we were going to be inspected by the celebrated General Bourcier, who had a great reputation for severity. I was told off to go and receive him with a detachment of thirty men. He met me very kindly and spoke of my father, whom he had known well, which did not prevent him from putting me under arrest the next day. It is a good story.

One of our captains, named B——, a fine young fellow, would have been one of the handsomest men in the army if his calves had been in keeping with the rest of his person; but he had legs like stilts, which had a very bad effect with the tight—so-called Hungarian—pantaloon worn at that time by the chasseurs. In order to meet this inconvenience, Captain B—— had had some good-sized pads made in the shape of calves, which made his handsome figure complete. These false calves cost me an arrest, though they were not the sole cause of it. It was prescribed by the regulations that the officers should have their horses' tails long, like those of the troopers. Our colonel, M. Moreau, was always admirably mounted, but all his horses had their tails docked, and, as he feared that General Bourcier, who was very strict in maintaining the regulations, would reprimand him for setting a bad example to his officers, he had caused, for the purpose of the inspection, false tails to be attached to all his horses. These were so marvellously well fitted that unless you knew you would have thought them natural. We went to the inspection, to which General Bourcier had invited General Suchet, inspector

of infantry, as well as General Gudin, commanding the territorial division. They were accompanied by a numerous and brilliant staff; the business took a long time, the movements were nearly all carried out at a gallop, and ended with several charges at full speed. I was commanding a section in the centre, forming part of the squadron under M. B——, near whom the colonel placed himself. They were, therefore, two paces in front of me, when the generals came forward to congratulate M. Moreau on the admirable style in which the manœuvres were carried out. But what did I see? The extreme rapidity of the movements which we had just made had deranged the symmetry of the additions which the captain and the colonel had made to their get-up. The false tail of the colonel's horse had become partly detached; the stump, composed of a plug of tow, was dragging almost on the ground, like a skein, while the false hair was up in the air, several feet higher, and spread out fan-shaped over the horse's croup, so that he seemed to have an enormous peacock's tail. As for M. B——'s sham calves, under the pressure of the saddle flaps they had slipped forward without his perceiving it, and presented a round lump on his shin bones, which produced a most comical effect; the captain all the while sitting proudly upright on his horse, as who should say, "Look at me! What a handsome man I am!" At twenty years old one has not much gravity; mine was overcome by the grotesque spectacle which I had under my eyes, and, in spite of the imposing presence of three generals, I could not restrain myself from shouting wildly with laughter. I writhed on my saddle, I gnawed the sleeve of my jacket: it was no use; I laughed and laughed until my sides ached. Thereupon the inspector-general, not knowing the cause of my merriment, ordered me to fall out of the ranks and put myself under arrest. I obeyed, but, as I was obliged to pass between the horses of the colonel and of the captain, my eyes fell again, in spite of myself, on that infernal tail and also on the new-fashioned calves, and there I was again seized with an extinguishable laugh which nothing could check. The generals must have thought that I was gone mad; but as soon as they had departed, the officers of the regiment, coming up to the colonel and Captain B——, soon knew what was the matter, and laughed like me—but at least with less danger to themselves.

That evening Major Blancheville was at a party at Mme. Gudin's. General Bourcier, who happened to be there, having spoken of what he called my freak, M. Blancheville explained

the cause of my irresistible fit of laughter. The generals, the ladies, and all the staff laughed till they cried at the story, and their gaiety redoubled at the entry of the handsome Captain B——, who, having replaced his false calves in the right position, came to show himself off in this brilliant company, without suspecting that he was one of the causes of its merriment. General Bourcier realized that if he had not been able to refrain from bursting with laughter at the mere description of the picture which I had had under my eyes, it was natural that a young sub-lieutenant should have been unable to contain himself when he was the witness of so ridiculous a spectacle. He remitted my arrest and sent to fetch me at once. As soon as I entered the room the inspector-general and all the assembly went off in an immense shout of laughter, in which my recollection of the morning made me take a full share ; and the mirth became crazy when M. B——, the only person who did not know the cause of it, was seen to go from one to the other, asking what it was all about, while everybody was looking at his calves.

While I was going through the course of the cavalry school great events were toward in Europe. England having been led by jealousy of the prosperity of France to break the Peace of Amiens,\* hostilities recommenced. The First Consul determined to push them actively forward by transporting an army to the soil of Great Britain—a daring operation, very difficult, but still not impossible. In order to carry it out, Napoleon, who had just seized Hanover, the special patrimony of England, formed several army corps on the coast of the North Sea and the Channel. He ordered an immense quantity of pinnaces and flat-bottomed boats for the embarkation of the troops to be built and collected at Boulogne and the neighbouring ports.

All the military world being stirred to activity for this war, I regretted that I could not take a share in it, and I understood what a false position I should be placed in at the renewal of hostilities. For, destined as I was to convey to my regiment the instruction which I had acquired in the cavalry school, I saw myself condemned to pass years at a *depôt*, whip in hand, making recruits trot on old horses, while my comrades were

\* [The question with whom rested the blame for the rupture of the short peace is one too complicated to be discussed here. Whether or not the technical fault was with England, readers of this book will probably admit that until Napoleon was crushed no permanent peace was possible.]

serving at the head of the troopers whom I had trained. The prospect was not very agreeable ; but how was I to change ? A regiment must always be supplied by recruits, and it was certain that my colonel, having sent me to the cavalry school in order to learn to drill recruits, would not deprive himself of the services which I could render in this kind, and would exclude me from his fighting squadrons. I was in this perplexity, when one day, as I was walking at the end of the Avenue of Paris with a book on the Theory in my hand, a bright idea occurred to me which totally changed my destiny and aided vastly to raise me to the rank which I hold.

I had just learnt that the First Consul, having fault to find with the Court of Lisbon, had given orders to form at Bayonne an army corps which was intended to enter Portugal under Augereau as commander-in-chief. I knew that this general owed his promotion partly to my father, under whom he had served at the camp of Toulon and in the Pyrenees ; and although the experience which I had gained at Genoa after my father's death was not calculated to give me a good opinion of man's gratitude, I resolved to write to Augereau informing him of my position, and begging him to deliver me from it by taking me for one of his aides-de-camp. I wrote my letter and sent it to my mother to obtain her approval. She not only assented, but, knowing that Augereau was in Paris, kindly took it to him herself. Augereau received the widow of his friend with the utmost courtesy ; he at once drove off to the Minister of War, and that very evening brought to my mother my appointment as aide-de-camp. Thus was fulfilled the wish which four-and-twenty hours before I had considered a dream. The next day I hastened to thank the general, he received me most kindly, and ordered me to come and join him as soon as possible at Bayonne, whither he was proceeding immediately.

I repaired promptly to Bayonne, where I took up my duty as aide-de-camp to the commander-in-chief. He was occupying the fine château of Marac, not far from the town, where some years afterwards the Emperor resided. I was well received by the general and by my new comrades his aides-de-camp, who had nearly all served under my father.

I must now give some account of Marshal Augereau's history. Most of the generals who became celebrated in the early wars of the Revolution rose from the lower ranks of society ; but it is wrong to imagine, as some have done, that they were without

education and owed their success to nothing but their brilliant courage. Augereau especially has been much misjudged. People have thought fit to represent him as a kind of rough, noisy, ill-conditioned swashbuckler. This is a mistake; for, although his youth was pretty stormy, and though he fell into sundry errors in politics, he was kind, well-mannered, and affectionate. I can assert that of the five marshals under whom I served he was distinctly the one who did most to alleviate the evils of war, who showed most kindness to non-combatants, and treated his officers the best, living with them like a father among his children.

Pierre Augereau was born in Paris in 1757. His father did a large business as a fruiterer, and had amassed a sufficient fortune to enable him to educate his children well. His mother was a native of Munich, and she had the good sense always to speak German to her son, so that he spoke it perfectly, which both in his travels and in war was of great use to him. Augereau was a handsome man, tall and well built. He was fond of all physical exercises, and a proficient at them: a good rider, and an excellent swordsman. At the age of seventeen he lost his mother, and her brother, who was one of the secretaries of Monsieur, obtained his enlistment in the carabineers, of which that prince was proprietary colonel. He passed some years at Saumur, the regular garrison of the carabineers. His attention to duty and his good conduct soon raised him to the rank of non-commissioned officer. Unfortunately, at that time there was a craze for duelling, and Augereau's reputation as an excellent fencer compelled him to fight often, for among the garrison it was the correct thing to allow no superior. Noblemen, officers, soldiers, used to fight on the most futile grounds. Thus it happened that on one occasion, when Augereau was on a long leave in Paris, the celebrated fencing-master Saint-Georges, seeing him pass, said in the presence of several swordsmen, that "there went one of the best blades in France." Thereupon a sergeant of dragoons named Belair, who claimed to be the next best to Saint-Georges, wrote to Augereau that he would like to fight him unless the other would admit his superiority. Augereau answered that he would do nothing of the sort, so they met in the Champs Elysées, and Belair got a thrust right through the body. He recovered, and, having left the service, married and became the father of eight children. In the early days of the Empire being at a loss how to feed them, it occurred to him to apply to his old adversary, now become a marshal. I

knew the man, he was witty and gay in a very original fashion. He called upon Augereau with a fiddle under his arm, and said that, having nothing to give his eight children for dinner, he was going to make them dance to keep up their spirits unless the marshal would kindly give him the means of supplying them with more substantial nourishment. Augereau recognized Belair, asked him to dinner, gave him money, and in a few days obtained him a very good post in the Government Parcels Office, and got two of his sons into a *lycée*. This conduct needs no remark.

About the year 1792 Augereau was promoted captain and sent to La Vendée. There, by his advice and his courage, he saved the army of the incapable General Ronsin, earning thereby the rank of major. Sick of fighting against Frenchmen, he asked permission to go to the Pyrenees, and was sent to the camp at Toulouse, then commanded by my father, who, struck with the way in which he performed his duty, got him the post of divisional-adjutant with colonel's rank and showed him much kindness, which Augereau never forgot. As general he distinguished himself in the wars in Spain and in Italy, especially at Castiglione. On the eve of this battle the French army was surrounded on all sides, and in a very critical position. Bonaparte, who was commanding in chief, summoned a council of war for the only time in his life. All the generals, even Masséna, were in favour of retreating, until Augereau, pointing out the way of escaping from the difficulty, ended by saying, "Were you all to go, I shall remain, and with my division shall attack the enemy at daybreak." Bonaparte, struck by Augereau's arguments, said, "Very well, I will stay with you." After that there was no more talk of retreat, and on the morrow a brilliant victory, due in great part to the valour and the fine tactics of Augereau, assured the position of the French army in Italy for a long time. So it was that when certain jealous tongues thought fit to slander Augereau in the presence of the Emperor, he answered, "Let us not forget that he saved us at Castiglione," and when he created his new nobility he named Augereau Duke of Castiglione.

On the death of General Hoche Augereau took his place with the Army of the Rhine, and after the establishment of the Consulate he was put in command of the Gallo-Batavian Army, composed of French and Dutch troops, with which he fought the campaign of 1800 in Franconia, and won the battle of Burg-Eberach.

After his elevation to the Consulate General Bonaparte formed

a numerous guard, the infantry of which he placed under the command of General Lannes. He, though a most distinguished soldier, had no idea of administration ; so, instead of keeping to the established rate for the purchase of cloth, linen, and such-like, thought that nothing could be good enough for his men. Consequently the officials of the clothing department, delighted at being able to deal with the purveyors by private contract in order to obtain their commissions, and further, thinking that the name of General Lannes, friend of the First Consul, would cover any amount of plundering, designed the uniforms in such luxurious style that when it came to paying the bills they were found to be 300,000 francs in excess of the sum allowed by the official regulations. The First Consul, who had resolved to bring the finances into order, and to compel the commanders of regiments not to exceed the credits sanctioned, was determined to make an example. Fond as he was of Lannes, and though convinced that not a centime had got into his pocket, he declared him responsible for the deficit of 300,000 francs, and allowed him only eight days to pay this sum into the regimental chest, under pain of being brought before a court-martial. This severe decision produced an excellent effect, putting a stop to the waste which had been going on in regimental expenditure. But Lannes, although recently married to the daughter of Senator Guéhéneuc, found it impossible to pay. Then Augereau, learning his friend's awkward position, hurried to his solicitor, got 300,000 francs, and told his secretary to pay them in the name of General Lannes into the regimental chest of the Guard. The First Consul, when he heard of this, was most grateful to Augereau, and in order to put Lannes in a position to be able to discharge his debt he gave him the very well-paid embassy to Lisbon.

## CHAPTER VIII

*LET US* return to Bayonne, where I had just joined Augereau's staff. The winter in those parts is very mild, so that the troops in camp were able to manœuvre and have sham fights, to practise us for our coming battles with the Portuguese. But the Court of Lisbon fell in with the views of the French Government on all points ; so we had no occasion to cross the Pyrenees, and Augereau was ordered to Brest, there to take command of the

7th corps of the Coast Army, which was to bring off an invasion of Ireland.

General Augereau's first wife, a Greek lady, was then at Pau, and, wishing to take leave of her, he went thither with three aides-de-camp, I being one. At that time, commanders-in-chief had each his squadron of *guides*, by a detachment of whom their carriages were constantly escorted so long as they were in the district occupied by troops under their command. There being as yet no *guides* at Bayonne, their place was supplied by posting a detachment of cavalry at every station between Bayonne and Pau. This duty was done by my late regiment, the 25th Chasseurs; so that as I sat at my ease in the commander-in-chief's carriage, I could see my former comrades trotting by the side of it.

We stayed twenty-four hours at Pau, and returned to Bayonne, whence the general despatched Mainvielle and me to Brest to get his quarters ready. We travelled by the mail as far as Bordeaux, but from that point there were no public conveyances, and we were obliged to bestride post-horses, which, of all ways of travelling, is certainly the roughest. It rained, the roads were fearful, the nights pitch-dark, and still we had to gallop ahead in spite of these hindrances, for our mission was urgent. I have never been a first-rate rider, but my practice on horseback and the year that I had just passed at the Versailles riding-school gave me sufficient confidence to enable me to push along the frightful screws which we were obliged to ride. I got pretty well therefore through my apprenticeship to the trade of mounted messenger, which you will see that I was forced by circumstances later on to learn thoroughly. Mainvielle was not so well off, so that it took us two days and two nights to reach Nantes, where he arrived utterly broken down and unable to ride post any farther. However, as we could not allow the commander-in-chief to find himself without lodging on his arrival at Brest, it was arranged that I should go on to that town, and that Mainvielle should rejoin me by carriage. On arriving I hired the house of the banker Pasquier, the brother of the former Chancellor and President of the Upper House. My comrades, including Mainvielle, soon joined me and helped me to arrange the commander-in-chief's establishment in a way that seemed suitable for the state in which he proposed to keep house.

During February Augereau was summoned to Paris by the First Consul to confer upon the plan of invading Ireland; I travelled with him. On reaching Paris we found the political



horizon very stormy. The Bourbons, who had hoped that Bonaparte, after seizing the reins of government, would work in their cause and get ready to play the part of Monk, when they saw that he had no idea of restoring the Crown to them, resolved to overthrow him. To this end they planned a conspiracy, the leaders of which were three men, all celebrated, but with very different titles to celebrity—General Pichegru, General Moreau, and Georges Cadoudal. Pichegru had been Bonaparte's mathematical tutor at the college of Brienne, and had left it to take service. When the Revolution broke out he was serjeant of artillery, his talents and his courage soon raised him to the command of an army. It was he who conquered Holland in the middle of winter; but his ambition was his ruin. He allowed himself to be inveigled by the agents of the Prince of Condé, and kept up a correspondence with the prince, who promised him great advancement and the title of Constable if he would use his influence with the troops towards replacing Louis XVIII on the throne of his fathers. Chance, that great arbiter of men's destinies, would have it that after a fight, in which the French troops under Moreau had beaten the division of the Austrian General Klinglin, the baggage wagon of the latter containing letters addressed by Pichegru to the Prince of Condé was captured and brought to Moreau. He was Pichegru's friend, and, in some measure, owed his promotion to him, so that as long as Pichegru was in power he concealed the fact of the capture. But when that general, being a member of the Council of Elders, had been arrested with many of his colleagues for acting on behalf of the Bourbons, Moreau lost no time in sending to the Directory the papers proving his guilt, which led to his transportation to Sinamary, in the deserts of Guiana. He contrived by dint of courage to escape, reached the United States, and then England, and, having from this time no more reason to keep up appearances, he became avowedly a paid agent of Louis XVIII, and decided to come to France to overthrow the Consular Government. However, as he could not hide from himself the fact that, having been cashiered, proscribed, and more than six years absent from France, his influence with the army could not be equal to that of Moreau, the conqueror of Hohenlinden, the favourite of the troops, and their inspector-general, he consented to hold his peace about his reasons for enmity towards Moreau, and to join with him for the triumph of the cause to which he was devoted.

Moreau, a Breton by birth, was studying law at Rennes when the Revolution of 1789 broke out. The turbulent young students chose him for their leader, and when they formed a battalion of volunteers they put Moreau in command of it. Thus, starting on the career of arms in the post of superior officer, he showed himself brave and capable, and was soon raised to the rank of general, and to the chief command of armies. He won several battles, and executed a justly celebrated retreat before the Archduke Charles. But, good soldier as he was, Moreau lacked political courage; as we have seen, he refused to put himself at the head of the Government while Bonaparte was in Egypt, and although he aided him on the 18th Brumaire, he became jealous of his power when he saw him First Consul. He sought every means of supplanting him—urged thereto, it was said, by the jealousy of his wife and his mother-in-law towards Josephine. 'This being Moreau's disposition, it was likely that he would easily be brought to co-operate with Pichegru for the overthrow of the Government.

A Breton named Lajolais, an agent of Louis XVIII, and a friend of Moreau, undertook to conduct communications between him and Pichegru, and was continually passing between London and Paris. By-and-by, however, it became clear that Moreau, while willing to aid in the overthrow of Bonaparte, was minded to hold the power himself, and by no means to hand it over to the Bourbons; and it was thought that a personal interview with Pichegru might put him in a better frame of mind. The latter accordingly was landed by an English vessel on the French coast, near Tréport, and proceeded to Paris, where he found Georges Cadoudal, M. de la Rivière, the two Polignacs, and other Royalists.

Cadoudal was son of a miller in the Morbihan, the youngest of a large family; but a custom exists in part of western Brittany\* by which the latest born takes the family property. Cadoudal's father was in easy circumstances, and he had received some education. He was of short stature, broad-shouldered, fierce as a tiger, and his daring courage had made him the chief leader of all the "Chouans" in Brittany. Since the pacification of la Vendée he had lived in London; but his fanatical zeal for the House of Bourbon allowed him no rest so long as the First Consul was at the head of the French Government. He formed a plan of killing him, not by secret assassination, but by attacking him

\*[And is not unknown, under the name of "borough-English," in the south of England. See Elton, *Origins of English History*, p. 187.]

in open day, on the road to Saint-Cloud, with the help of a force of thirty or forty mounted and armed Chouans, disguised as soldiers of the Consular Guard. There was some chance that this plan might succeed, Bonaparte at that time being, as a rule, escorted only by four troopers.

An interview was arranged between Pichegru and Moreau. It took place at night, near the then unfinished Church of the Madeleine. Moreau agreed to the overthrow, and even to the murder, of the First Consul, but would give no aid towards the restoration of the Bourbons. Bonaparte's secret police soon gave notice that some dark business was on foot in Paris, and he ordered the arrest of several old Chouans. One of these made important revelations compromising Moreau, and the Council resolved to arrest him also.

I remember that this arrest produced a very bad impression. Cadoudal and Pichegru not being as yet arrested, no one thought that they were in France, and it was said that the conspiracy had been trumped up by Bonaparte as an excuse for arresting Moreau. It was, therefore, to the interest of the Government to prove that they were in Paris, and had been in communication with him. The barriers were closed for some days, and a law of the utmost severity passed against all who sheltered the conspirators. Unable to find a hiding-place, Pichegru, M. de la Rivière, and the Polignacs soon fell into the hands of the police. Their arrest led the public to begin to believe in the conspiracy; and when Cadoudal was captured, all doubts were at an end. He admitted, when examined, that he had come to kill the First Consul, and that the plot was to have the support of a prince of the blood royal. The police were thus led to inquire the whereabouts of all the Bourbon princes. They learned that the Duke of Enghien, a descendant of the Great Condé, had been living for a short time at Ettenheim, a little town in Baden, a few leagues from the Rhine. It has never been proved that the duke was the leader of the conspiracy, though there is no doubt that he had more than once been imprudent enough to enter French territory. Be that as it may, the First Consul caused a detachment of troops, under General Ordener, to cross the Rhine under cover of night, to go to Ettenheim, and seize the Duke of Enghien. He was brought straight to Vincennes, tried, condemned, and shot, before the public had heard of his arrest. This execution was generally blamed. If the prince had been taken on French territory, the law prescribing the capital penalty

in such cases might conceivably have been applied ; but to carry him off from a foreign country, beyond the frontier, appeared a monstrous violation of international law.

There seems, however, reason to think that the First Consul had not intended to execute the prince, and only wished to terrify the Royalist party , but General Savary, chief of the gendarmerie, hastened to Vincennes as soon as judgment was pronounced, took possession of the prince, and with a superabundance of zeal had him shot—in order, as he said, to deliver the First Consul from the dilemma of having either to order his death or spare the life of a dangerous enemy. Savary afterwards repudiated this remark ; but I have been assured by those who were present and heard it, that he certainly made it. Nor is it less certain that Bonaparte blamed Savary for his haste ; but the thing being done he had to accept the consequences.

General Pichegru, ashamed of having been in league with assassins, and unwilling that the conqueror of Holland should share the sentence of Chouan criminals, hanged himself in prison with his neckcloth. An assertion was made that he had been strangled by some of Bonaparte's mamelukes , but this was a fabrication. Moreover, it would have been a useless crime, it being rather to Bonaparte's interest to display Pichegru in disgrace before a tribunal than to kill him in private. Cadoudal, with several of his associates, was condemned to death and executed. The Polignacs and M. de la Rivière were similarly sentenced, but the penalty was commuted to imprisonment for life. They were at first shut up at Vincennes, then allowed under parole to reside in a private hospital. On the approach of the Allies in 1814 they escaped and joined the Count of Artois in Franche-Comté, and in the following year were among the bitterest in urging the prosecutions of Bonapartists. As for General Moreau, he was condemned to two years' imprisonment. The First Consul remitted his sentence, on condition of his going to the United States. He lived there in obscurity till 1813, and then returned to Europe to take his place among the enemies of his country, and to die fighting against Frenchmen,\* thus confirming all the accusations brought against him at the time of Pichegru's conspiracy.

The French nation, weary of revolutions, and seeing how

\*[In the Russian army at Dresden, September 1, 1813. In his last letter to his wife, after he received his mortal wound, he wrote : " Ce coquin de Bonaparte a toujours été heureux."]

necessary Bonaparte was if order were to be maintained, forgot the odious business of the Duke of Enghien, and acclaimed Bonaparte Emperor on May 25, 1804. Most Courts recognized the new sovereign. On this occasion, eighteen of the most conspicuous generals were appointed marshals of the Empire: Berthier, Augereau, Masséna, Lannes, Davout, Murat, Moncey, Jourdan, Bernadotte, Ney, Bessières, Mortier, Soult, and Brune in the active army; Kellermann, Lefebvre, Pérignon, and Sérurier in the Senate.

After Moreau's trial, we returned to Brest; but soon we were back in Paris, as on July 14 the marshal had to attend the distribution of the decorations of the Legion of Honour, an order newly founded by the Emperor to reward merit of all kinds. *A propos* of this, I may recall an anecdote which went about at the time. In order that all soldiers who had distinguished themselves in the Republican armies might share in the decoration, the Emperor ordered a report of the exploits of all those who had received arms of honour and noted a good number of them for the Legion, although many had now entered civil life.

After distributing the crosses at Paris, the Emperor visited the camp at Boulogne for the same purpose. The army was drawn up in a semi-circle on an open space fronting the sea; it was an imposing ceremony. The Emperor appeared for the first time on a throne, surrounded by his marshals. The enthusiasm was indescribable. The English fleet, perceiving the ceremony, sent some vessels of light draught to disturb it by a cannonade; but our coast batteries replied actively. At the end of the ceremony, the Emperor, returning to Boulogne, followed by his marshals and a numerous train, halted behind the batteries, and calling General Marmont, who had served in the artillery, said: "Let us see if we recollect our old trade, and which of us can send a shell on to that English brig which has come so close to tease us." Then the Emperor, motioning to one side the corporal of artillery in charge of the piece, laid the mortar; they fired, and the shell, grazing the sails of the brig, fell into the sea. General Marmont laid the gun in his turn, also came near the mark, but also did not touch the brig, which, seeing the battery full of generals, fired with double rapidity. "Come, take your place again," said Napoleon to the corporal. He in his turn aimed, and dropped the shell right in the middle of the brig. Pierced through and through by the great projectile, the vessel filled in an instant, and sank in a

stately way in sight of the whole French army. Enchanted by the fortunate omen, the soldiers broke out into loud cheers, while the English fleet made all sail away. The Emperor congratulated the corporal of artillery, and decorated him on the spot with his own hands.\*

I too had a share in the favours distributed that day. I had been sub-lieutenant five years and a half, and had made several campaigns. At Augereau's request the Emperor appointed me lieutenant.

The good marshal now showed a redoubled liking for me, and, in order to prove it by putting me in direct relations with the Emperor, he selected me in September to go to Fontainebleau to fetch Napoleon and escort him to the château of La Houssaye, where he came and passed twenty-four hours, accompanied by several marshals. It was while walking with them there that the Emperor, after imparting to them his views as to the way in which he wished to keep up his dignity and theirs, presented each of them with the sum necessary to buy a house in Paris. Marshal Augereau bought the Hôtel Rochechouart, situated in the Rue de Grenelle Saint-Germain, which is now used as the office of Public Instruction. It is a splendid house; but the marshal preferred to stay at La Houssaye, where he lived in fine style, for, besides his aides-de-camp, each of whom had his own apartments, there was always a large number of guests. We enjoyed perfect liberty, and the marshal let us do anything, provided that there was no noise near the wing of the château occupied by his wife.

In November the marshal returned to Paris. The date of the Emperor's coronation was approaching, and the Pope was already at the Tuileries for the ceremony. A crowd of magistrates and deputations from the different departments had been summoned to the capital; there were also all the colonels of the army, with detachments from their regiments,

\*[This pleasing anecdote, though not as strictly true as one could wish, has some foundation. On the actual day of the distribution of the crosses no English vessel was sunk by the batteries, and no brig anywhere about that time. The *Immortalité* frigate was struck by a shot on that day, but not materially injured. On the following day, however, a 13-inch shell fell on board the armed cutter *Constitution*, with very much the result here described, except that she did not sink until all her crew had been brought off by the boats of the squadron (James). Whether Napoleon was in the battery whence this shell was fired, the naval historian does not say.]

to whom the Emperor distributed on the Champ de Mars those eagles which have since been so celebrated. Paris was splendid with a display of a luxury hitherto unknown. The coronation took place on the 2nd of December. I need not describe the ceremony, for this has been often done. Some days afterwards the marshals gave a ball to the Emperor and Empress. As you know there were eighteen of them. Marshal Duroc, although he was only Prefect of the Palaces, joined with them, which brought the number of the contributors up to nineteen, each of whom paid 25,000 francs towards the expenses. The ball took place in the great hall of the Opera; nothing so magnificent was ever seen. General Samson, of the engineers, was the manager, the marshals' aides-de-camp were the stewards, charged with doing the honours and distributing tickets. All Paris wanted to be there, and the aides-de-camp were assailed with letters and requests. I never had so many friends. Everything passed with the most perfect order, and the Emperor appeared satisfied.

In the midst of these festivities opened the year 1805, which was to be so prolific of great events. To give his army a share in the general rejoicing, Marshal Augereau repaired to Brest, where, in spite of the rigours of winter, he gave magnificent balls, and entertained in turn the officers, and even a good many of the soldiers. In the first days of spring he returned to La Houssaye, to await the moment of the invasion of England.

This expedition, though often spoken of as chimerical, was nevertheless on the point of coming off. An English squadron of about fifteen vessels, cruising continually in the Channel, rendered it impossible to transport the French army in boats and pinnaces, which would have sunk at the least touch from large vessels. But the Emperor was able to dispose of sixty sail of the line, French and allied, which were distributed through the ports of Brest, L'Orient, Rochefort, Ferrol, and Cadiz. His notion was to assemble them unexpectedly in the Channel, to crush by an overwhelming force the small squadron which the English had there, and thus to be able to command the passage, were it but for three days.

To this end the Emperor ordered Admiral Villeneuve, commander-in-chief of the naval forces, to send at once every available vessel out of the ports of France and Spain, with orders to sail not for Boulogne, but for Martinique, where it was certain that the English fleet would follow them. While it was hastening

off to the Antilles, Villeneuve was to leave those islands before it came up, to sail back round the north of Scotland, and return to the Channel by its upper end. With his sixty vessels he would easily beat the fifteen which the English kept in front of Boulogne, and put Napoleon in command of the passage. The English, on reaching Martinique, not finding Villeneuve's fleet there, would have felt about before starting in pursuit of him, and thus lost precious time. Only part of this fine plan was carried out. Villeneuve started not with sixty, but with something over thirty ships, and reached Martinique. The English, falling into the trap, hastened to the Antilles just as Villeneuve had started back; but the French admiral, instead of returning by Scotland, sailed for Cadiz in order to effect a junction with the Spanish fleet, as if thirty ships were not enough to defeat or drive off the fifteen ships of the English. Nor was that all; Villeneuve lost much time at Cadiz in repairing his ships, during which the enemy's fleet also got back to Europe, and cruised off Cadiz. Finally, the equinoctial gales rendered egress from the port difficult, and Villeneuve found himself blockaded. Thus collapsed the Emperor's ingenious combination.\* Realizing that the English would not fall into the trap again, he renounced, or postponed indefinitely, his plan of invading Great Britain, and turned his eyes again towards the Continent.

At the moment when the Emperor most needed to be at peace with the Continental Powers, for the execution of his plan of invading England, he issued a decree uniting Genoa to France. This served the turn of the English admirably. They profited by his action to alarm all the Continental nations, representing that Napoleon aspired to a general attack on the whole of Europe. Russia and Austria declared war against us; Prussia, with more circumspection, prepared for war, but as yet did not declare. The Emperor, doubtless, had foreseen this hostile movement, and the desire to bring matters to a crisis was perhaps his reason for taking possession of Genoa. The hope that Villeneuve might make himself master for a few days of the Channel, by uniting the whole French and Spanish fleets, was at an end. A Continental war was the best means of escaping from the ridicule and appearance of impotence as regarded England, which the failure of the invasion scheme, after three years' open preparation,

\* ["A scheme bearing the impression of a landsman's mind" is the phrase applied to it by an English historian, and this seems to have been the view taken by its intended victims.]



had brought upon his arms. The new coalition came just at the right moment to get him out of an annoying position.

Three years in camps had had an excellent result on our troops. Never had France possessed an army so well trained, of such good material, so eager for fighting and fame. Never had a general had under his hand forces so powerful both materially and intellectually, with such capacity for using them. Napoleon, therefore, accepted the war with joy, so certain was he of victory, so confident that he would use his enemies' mistakes to strengthen his throne. He knew how the chivalrous spirit of Frenchmen has in all ages been influenced by the enthusiasm of military glory.

## CHAPTER IX

*THE GRAND* Army, which the Emperor was about to set in motion against Austria, had at that time its rear towards that Power, and towards Europe; the two French corps extended along the coasts of the North Sea, the Channel, and the ocean, facing towards England. Thus the right wing of the first corps, under Bernadotte, was occupying Hanover; the second, under Marmont, was in Holland; the third, under Davout, at Bruges; the fourth, fifth, and sixth, commanded by Soult, Lannes, and Ney respectively, were encamped about Boulogne, while the seventh, Augereau's division, was on the extreme left, at Brest.

To break up this long *cordon*, and mass the troops for the march into Austria, involved a reversal of the front on a vast scale. Every army corps, therefore, had to face about, so as to bring its front towards Germany, and march thither by the nearest road. The right wing became the left, and vice versa. It will be seen that to reach the Danube from Hanover or from Holland, the first and second divisions had a much shorter march to make than those which were at Boulogne; while these again were much nearer than Augereau's corps, which, in order to reach the Swiss frontiers from Brest, had to traverse the whole breadth of France, a distance of three hundred leagues. Travelling in several columns, the army took two months to cover the distance. Augereau, starting the last from Brest, passed them, and halting first at Rennes, then at Alençon, Melun, Troyes, and Langres, he inspected the various regiments, and roused their ardour by

his presence. It was magnificent weather. I passed the two months in a post-chaise, going incessantly from one column to another with orders from the marshal. Twice I was able to stop at Paris and see my mother. Our studs had preceded us; I had three excellent horses, and a servant of moderate quality.

While the Grand Army marched on the Rhine and the Danube, the French troops who were quartered in Upper Italy under the command of Masséna assembled in the province of Milan in order to attack the Austrians on Venetian territory. To transmit orders to Masséna the Emperor was obliged to send his aides-de-camp through Switzerland, which was neutral ground. Now it happened that while Augereau was at Langres an orderly officer bearing despatches from Napoleon was overturned in his carriage and broke his collar-bone. He had himself carried to the marshal's quarters, and declared to him that he could not possibly accomplish his mission. The marshal, knowing how important it was that the Emperor's despatches should reach Italy without loss of time, ordered me to carry them forward by way of Huningen, whither I had also to take his orders with regard to throwing a bridge across the Rhine. This duty pleased me much, for it would give me a fine journey, with the certainty of rejoining the 7th corps before it could come in contact with the Austrians. I quickly reached Huningen and Basle, thence came to Berne and Rapperschwyl, where I left my carriage; then on horseback I crossed the Splugen, which was then almost impracticable, and not without danger. I entered Italy by Chiavenna, and joined Masséna near Verona. But it was only there and back, for Masséna was in as great a hurry to see me start back with his reply to the Emperor as I was myself to rejoin Augereau so as not to miss any affairs in which his division might be engaged. I did not, however, return as quickly as I had come, for a heavy snowfall had recently covered not the mountains only, but also the valleys. It was freezing hard, horses fell at every step, and I had to pay 600 frs. for two guides across the Splugen. The passage took us more than twelve hours, walking knee-deep in the snow. The guides even were on the point of refusing to go any further, asserting that there was imminent danger; but I was young and daring, and well aware of the importance of the despatches which the Emperor was awaiting. I declared, therefore, to my two guides that if they turned back I should go on without them. Every profession has its point of honour—that of guides consists chiefly in never

abandoning the travellers entrusted to them; so mine went forward, and, after really extraordinary efforts, we reached the great inn at the foot of the Splügen just at nightfall. If we had been benighted in the mountain we must inevitably have perished, for the path was barely marked, and was bounded by precipices which the snow would have hindered us from seeing. I was thoroughly done up, but a night's rest restored my energy. I started at daybreak and reached Rapperschwyl where I found a carriage and a road to drive on. The most difficult part of the journey was over; in spite of the snow and severe cold I got to Basle and then to Hünningen, where the 7th corps was assembled, on October 19. Next morning we began to pass the Rhine on a bridge of boats constructed for that purpose, for, although a short half-league lower down there was a stone bridge in the city of Basle, the Emperor had ordered Marshal Augereau to respect Swiss neutrality. Nine years later the Swiss themselves violated neutrality when they opened this bridge in 1814 to the enemies of France.

There then I was once again on campaign. It was 1805, a year which saw the opening of a long period of warfare for me, not to end till Waterloo, ten years later. Numerous as were the wars of the Empire, nearly all French military men enjoyed one or more years of rest, either because they were doing garrison duty in France, or because they were in Italy or Germany at a time when we had no war save in Spain; but, as you will see, this was not my case. Constantly sent from north to south, and from south to north, wherever there was fighting going on, I did not pass one of these ten years without coming under fire, or without shedding my blood on the soil of some part of Europe.

I do not intend to relate in detail the campaign in 1805; I will confine myself to recording some of the principal events. The Russians, who were marching to the support of Austria, were still far off when Field-Marshal Mack, having imprudently entered Bavaria at the head of 80,000 men, was beaten by Napoleon, outmanœuvred, compelled to take refuge in the fortress of Ulm, and with the greater part of his army, of which only two corps escaped, to lay down his arms. Of these divisions, one, under the command of the Archduke Ferdinand, succeeded in reaching Bohemia; the other, under the old Field-Marshal Jellachich, threw itself into the Vorarlberg towards the Lake of Constance, resting with one flank on Swiss neutral territory, and watching

the passes of the Black Forest.\* It was against this latter force that Augereau was to act.

After crossing the Rhine at Huningen, the 7th corps was in Baden, the sovereign of which, like those of Bavaria and Wurtemberg, had just concluded an alliance with Napoleon. We were thus received well by the population of Breisgau. Field-Marshal Jellachich had not ventured to try conclusions with the French in a country where the communications are so easy, but was awaiting us on the other side of Freiburg, at the entrance to the Black Forest, reckoning on making us pay a heavy price in bloodshed as the cost of the passage. His chief hope was to stop us in the Hollenthal, a long and narrow gorge, commanded on all sides by steep rocks easy to defend; but the troops, jealous of the brilliant success won by their comrades at Ulm, and eager to show their valour also, dashed hotly into the Black Forest and crossed it in three days, in spite of the difficulties of the ground, the resistance of the enemy, and the scarcity of provisions in that dreadful desert. Finally, the army emerged into a fertile country and encamped about the pleasant town of Donaueschingen. Marshal Augereau and his aides-de-camp were quartered in the magnificent château belonging to the ancient princely house of Furstenberg, in the grounds of which is the source of the Danube. The mighty river shows its power from its birth, for it is navigable for small boats at its issue from the ground. The artillery teams and our carriages had experienced great labour in the rocky defiles of the Black Forest, rendered still more difficult by the icy state of the ground. We had, therefore, to give the horses several days' rest, during which the Austrian cavalry came from time to time to feel our outposts, which were two leagues in advance of the town. Nothing came of it, however, but a little sharpshooting, which amused us, practised us in skirmishing, and gave us an opportunity of learning the various uniforms of the enemy. There I saw for the first time the Archduke Charles's Uhlans, the Rosenberg Dragoons, and the Blauenstein Hussars. When our teams were sufficiently rested, the army continued its march, and during several weeks we had continual engagements, which left us in possession of Engen and Stockach.

After having conquered the whole Vorarlberg, we took possession of Bregenz, and rolled back Jellachich's force upon the Lake of Constance and upon Tyrol. The enemy was covered

\* [Here and elsewhere the name Vorarlberg seems to be loosely used.]

by the fortress and the celebrated defile of Feldkirch, behind which he might have resisted us with advantage. We were expecting a murderous fight to carry this strong position, when, to our great astonishment, the Austrians expressed a desire to capitulate, which Marshal Augereau accepted with alacrity.

During the interview which the two marshals held on this occasion, the Austrian officers, who were humiliated by the recent reverses to their arms, gave themselves the malicious pleasure of imparting to us a very unwelcome piece of news, which had hitherto been concealed from us, but which the Russians and Austrians had learnt by way of England. The French and Spanish fleets had been beaten by Lord Nelson on October 20,\* not far from Cadiz, off Cape Trafalgar. Our ill-starred Admiral Villeneuve, whom no positive order of Napoleon could determine to throw off his inactivity at a time when the sudden appearance of the fleets of France and Spain in the Channel might have secured the passage to England of the armies collected at Boulogne—Villeneuve, I say, on learning that he was about to be superseded by Admiral Rosily, passed in a moment from excessive circumspection to the extreme of audacity. He issued from Cadiz and delivered battle.† Had this action turned out in our favour it would have been almost useless, since the French army, instead of being at Boulogne to profit by his success and cross to England, was fighting in the centre of Germany, more than two hundred leagues from the coast. After a most obstinate combat, the fleets of Spain and France were beaten by that of England, whose admiral, the celebrated Nelson, was slain, bearing to his grave the reputation of the first seaman of the age. On our side we lost Rear-Admiral Magon, a most meritorious officer; one of our vessels blew up, seventeen French and Spanish were taken. A terrible storm arose towards the end of the battle, and lasted all that night and the following day. It very nearly made an end of both conquerors and conquered; the English, having their own safety to consider, were obliged to abandon nearly all their prizes, the greater part of which were brought into Cadiz by the remainder of their brave and unfortunate crews; others went to pieces on the rocks and were lost.

When a force capitulates, it is customary for the conqueror to send to each division a staff officer to take possession of it,

\* [Really October 21.]

† [At Napoleon's express orders.]

as it were, and bring it at the appointed time to the place where it is to lay down its arms. I had been ordered by Augereau to take my place with the Austrian cavalry, in order to bring it to the appointed place of assembling. This brigade, consisting of three strong regiments, was not under any general, but was commanded by the colonel of the Blankenstein Hussars, a brave and very crafty old Hungarian. I regret that I was not able to catch his name, for I have a great regard for him, although he contrived to bamboozle me in a very unpleasant fashion.

When I arrived in his camp the colonel had offered me hospitality for the night in the hut where he was lodging, and we agreed to start at daybreak in order to reach the place appointed on the shore of the Lake of Constance between the towns of Bregenz and Lindau. As we had at most three leagues to cover, I was much surprised to hear the officers mounting about midnight. I rushed out and saw that the squadrons were forming and that they were getting ready to start. The colonels of the uhlans and of the Rosenberg Dragoons, who were under the orders of the colonel of hussars, but had not been informed of his plans, came to ask the motive of this premature departure. I did the same. Thereupon the old colonel answered us, with calm hypocrisy, that Field-Marshal Jellachich, fearing that the French might taunt the Austrian soldiers as they passed their camp, which lay on the direct road to the shore by Lindau, and thus produce quarrels between the troops, had, with Marshal Augereau's consent, ordered the Austrian troops to make a long détour to the right, and thus, by turning the French camp and the town of Bregenz, avoid a meeting with our soldiers. He added that, as the way was much longer and the roads difficult, the leaders of the two armies had put forward the hour of departure by several hours. He was surprised that I had not been informed of it, but probably the letter which had been addressed to me on the subject had been by some misunderstanding stopped at the outposts. He even went so far as to order an officer to go and inquire for this despatch along the whole line. The motives alleged by the colonel of the Blankenstein appeared to his two comrades so natural that they made no remark upon it. Nor did I, although I had an instinctive feeling that the whole thing was a little shady; but what could I do, alone in the middle of the enemy's three thousand cavalry? It seemed better to show confidence than to appear to doubt the good faith of the Austrian brigade. I marched with him, therefore, at the head of the

column. The Austrian commander, who knew the country intimately, had made his arrangements so well for keeping away from the French pickets, the position of which, moreover, was shown by their fires, that we did not pass near any of them.

So I continued to march all the rest of the night with the enemy's column, finding that the *détour* which we had to make was certainly very long, and that the roads were very bad. Finally as the day dawned, the old colonel perceiving a bit of level ground said to me in a bantering tone that although he was obliged before long to hand over the horses of his three regiments to the French, he wished at least to deliver them in a good condition and to take care of the poor animals up to the last moment, and with this view he was going to order a feed of corn to be given them.

The brigade halted, formed, dismounted, and as soon as the horses were picketed, the colonel, who alone had remained mounted, assembled the officers and troopers of the three regiments in a circle round him. There, in an inspired tone which rendered this old warrior really magnificent, he announced to them that the Prince of Rohan's division, preferring honour to safety with disgrace, had refused to agree to the shameful capitulation under which Field-Marshal Jellachich had promised to give up to the French the standards and arms of the Austrian troops, and had thrown itself into the Tyrol. He would have brought his cavalry division thither also had he not feared that forage for so large a number of horses would not be obtainable in the mountains. However, the plain was before them, by an artifice on which he congratulated himself they had got six leagues' start of the French troops, and all those who had a true Austrian heart might follow him across Germany into Moravia, where he intended to rejoin the troops of their august Emperor, Francis II.

The Blankenstein Hussars replied to their colonel's allocution by a loud hurrah of approbation, but the Rosenberg Dragoons and the Archduke Charles's Uhlans kept a gloomy silence. As for myself, although I did not as yet know German enough to follow the colonel's harangue accurately, the words which I had caught, as well as the speaker's tone and the place in which he was, had made me guess what was on hand, and I admit that I felt very sheepish at having, although unwittingly, made myself the accomplice of this devil of a Hungarian. Meantime a frightful uproar arose in the immense circle which surrounded me, and

I had a good opportunity of judging of the inconvenience which results from the heterogeneous mixture of the different races composing the monarch, and consequently the army, of Austria. All the hussars are Hungarians; the Blankenstein, therefore, approved the proposal made by their colonel and fellow-countryman. But the dragoons were German, and the uhlans Polish, and for this reason the Hungarian had not the same influence over these two regiments, who in this dilemma listened only to their own officers. These declared that, considering themselves bound by the capitulation which the field-marshal had signed, they did not wish by their departure to put him and those of their comrades who were already in the hands of the French into a worse position; since, if any part of the Austrian troops violated the terms, the rest were liable to be taken as prisoners to France. To this the colonel of hussars replied that when the commander-in-chief of an army has lost his head, and failed in his duty so far as to deliver his troops to the enemy, it is the duty of his subordinates to consult only their own courage and patriotism. Then, waving his sword in one hand, and seizing the regimental colours with the other, he cried, "Go, dragoons, go, and hand over to the French your disgraced colours, and the arms which our Emperor gave you to defend them. As for us brave hussars, we are going to rejoin our august sovereign. We shall be able to show him a flag without stain, and swords born by valiant soldiers." Then, coming up to me, and casting a scornful look at the uhlans and dragoons, he added, "I am quite sure that if this young Frenchman were in our place and compelled to choose between your course and mine, he would take the courageous side. The French love glory no less than their country, and in matters of honour know what they are about." With these words the old Hungarian chief set spurs to his horse, and taking his regiment off at a gallop swept away and soon was out of sight.

There was a measure of truth in both the arguments which I had just heard; but I was more convinced by that of the hussar colonel, because it seemed to me best to suit the interests of his country. I inwardly approved his conduct, therefore; but I could not very well advise the dragoons and the uhlans to follow his example, without exceeding my functions and neglecting my duty. So I maintained a strict neutrality in the discussion, and when the hussars had departed, I proposed to the other two colonels that they should follow me, and we took the road to Lindau. On the shore of the lake we found the



Marshals Jellachich and Augereau, as well as the French army and the two Austrian regiments of infantry which had not followed the Prince of Rohan. On learning from me that the Blankenstein Hussars had declined to recognize the capitulation, and had gone off towards Moravia, both marshals were exceedingly angry. Augereau's wrath arose chiefly from the fear lest the hussars should raise the country in rear of the French army, for the road which they would take lay through the districts in which the Emperor, in marching on Vienna, had left huge masses of his wounded, parks of artillery, and so on. But the colonel thought it better not to notify his presence by attempting any surprise, being in a hurry to get away from the regions lying within the radius of the French army. Therefore, avoiding our outposts, following always by roads, hiding in the forests by day, and marching with all speed by night, he managed to reach the frontier of Moravia without hindrance, and rejoined the Austrian army, which occupied that country.

The troops which surrendered, after giving into our hands their arms, colours, and horses, departed in gloomy silence, as prisoners for one year on parole, in the direction of Bohemia. I remembered as I saw them go the noble harangue of the old Hungarian colonel, and thought I traced in the faces of many of the uhlan and dragoon signs of regret that they had not followed the old warrior, and grief at comparing the honourable position of the Blankenstein with their own humiliation.

Among the trophies given up to us by Jellachich's army were seventeen colours and two standards. According to custom Augereau sent these at once to the Emperor by the hands of two aides-de-camp, and entrusted the duty of taking them to Major Massy and me. We started in a good carriage, preceded by a post-wagon, in which were the colours under guard of a sergeant. We went to Vienna by Kempten, Munich, Linz, and Saint-Polten, passing the superb abbey of Molk on the Danube, one of the richest in the world, a little before reaching the last-named place. Four years later I performed on this spot the most brilliant feat of my military career, under the eyes of the Emperor, and was commended for it by him, as you will hear when we reach the narrative of the campaign of 1809. But I will not anticipate.

## CHAPTER X

*IN SEPTEMBER* 1805, as you have seen, the seven corps composing the Grand Army were on the march from the shores of the ocean to the banks of the Danube. When on October 1st the Emperor Napoleon crossed the Rhine in person at Strasburg, they were already in possession of Baden and Wurtemberg. At the same time a part of the strong force which Russia was sending to the aid of Austria reached Moravia, and the Cabinet of Vienna would in prudence have waited until this powerful reinforcement had joined the Austrian troops. But, carried away by an unwonted ardour, at the instigation of Field-Marshal Mack, it had despatched him at the head of 80,000 men against Bavaria. Of this country Austria had for centuries coveted the possession, while it had been the constant policy of France to defend it against invasions. Compelled to leave his state, the Elector of Bavaria retired with his family and his army to Wurzburg, whence he invoked the aid of Napoleon, who granted an alliance to him, and at the same time to the sovereigns of Baden and Wurtemberg.

After the Austrian army under Mack had occupied Ulm, Napoleon, crossing the Danube at Donauwerth, made himself master of Augsburg and Munich. Thus the French army had got in rear of Mack, and cut the communications between the Austrians and Russians, whose leading columns were known to be already at Vienna and coming on by forced marches. The field-marshal then, recognizing too late the mistake of allowing himself to be surrounded by the French troops in a circle of which the fortress of Ulm was the centre, tried to get out of it; but was beaten in the successive battles of Werthungen, Gunzburg, and, above all, of Elchingen, where Marshal Ney covered himself with glory, and was closed in more and more until he was compelled to shut himself up in Ulm with his army. The divisions of the Archduke Ferdinand and of Jellachich alone contrived to get away, the former towards Bohemia, the latter towards the Lake of Constance. Ulm was invested by the Emperor, and, although it was not then much fortified, might, nevertheless, owing to its position and its numerous garrison, have held out for a long period and given the Russians time to come to its aid. But Field-Marshal Mack, passing from boastfulness the most overweening to the most utter discouragement, laid down his arms to Napoleon,

who had thus in three weeks dispersed, captured, or destroyed 80,000 Austrians, and delivered Bavaria. The Elector was brought back, and we shall see him in 1813 requite the benefit by the most odious treason.

No longer impeded by Mack's army the Emperor hastened his march on Vienna, passing along the right bank of the Danube. He took possession of Passau, then of Linz, where he learnt that 50,000 Russians under General Kutusoff, reinforced by 40,000 Austrians, whom General Kienmayer had succeeded in bringing together, had crossed the Danube at Vienna, and were in position at Molk and St.-Polten. To guard against a flank attack, the Emperor, having Augereau's division already in the direction of Bregenz, ordered Ney to invade Tyrol, and sent Marmont's division to Leoben to stop the Archduke Charles on his way from Italy.

When Major Massy and I reached Vienna, on the mission entrusted to us by Augereau, Napoleon and the bulk of his army had already left that city, of which they had taken possession without striking a blow. Even the passage of the Danube, which it was necessary to cross in order to pursue the Austrians and Russians, who had retired into Moravia, had not been disputed, thanks to a perhaps not wholly creditable trick employed by Marshals Lannes and Murat. This episode, which had so great an influence on the result of this famous campaign, deserves to be related. The city of Vienna stands on the right bank of the Danube. A small branch of the great river flows through the town, from which the main stream is more than half a league distant. At this point the Danube forms a number of islands, connected by a long series of wooden bridges, the last of which crosses the largest arm and rests on the left bank at a place called Spitz. Over this long series of bridges runs the road to Moravia. When the Austrians defend the passage across a river, they have the very bad habit of keeping up the bridges till the last moment, in order to retain the power of making counter attacks. The enemy seldom allows them time to do this, and carries by assault the bridges which they have omitted to burn. The French treated them thus in the campaign of 1796, in the memorable actions of Lodi and Arcola. Even these warnings could not cure the Austrians of the habit. After abandoning Vienna, which was not capable of defence, they retired across the Danube without destroying one of the bridges traversing that mighty stream, and confined themselves to distributing inflammable

materials on the flooring of the great bridge, in order to set it on fire when the French appeared. Besides this, they had established on the left bank, at the further end of the bridge of Spitz, a strong battery of artillery and a division of 6,000 men, under the command of Prince Auersperg, a brave soldier, but not a man of much ability. I should mention that a few days before the entry of the French into Vienna, the Emperor had received the Austrian general, Count Gyulai, who came with a flag of truce to make proposals for peace. These had no results; but as soon as the advanced guard had taken possession of Vienna, and Napoleon was established in the royal palace of Schonbrunn, General Gyulai returned and passed more than an hour alone with the Emperor. Thereupon the rumour that an armistice was about to be concluded spread not only among the French regiments as they entered Vienna, but among the Austrian troops who were leaving the town to go across the Danube.

Murat and Lannes, whom the Emperor had ordered to try and make themselves masters of the passage of the river, marched towards the bridge, posted Oudinot's grenadiers in rear of the thick plantations, and then went forward accompanied only by some officers who could speak German. The weak pickets fell back firing on them; the two marshals cried out to the Austrians that there was an armistice, and, continuing to advance, they crossed all the little bridges without hindrance, and having reached the large one, they made the same statement to the officer in command at Spitz. He did not venture to fire upon two marshals, who came almost alone, asserting that hostilities were suspended; but before letting them pass he wished to go himself to General Auersperg and get his orders. While he was gone, leaving the post in charge of a sergeant, Lannes and Murat persuaded the latter that as a condition of the armistice was that the bridge should be given up to them, he with his soldiers must go and rejoin his officer on the left bank. The poor sergeant hesitated; they pushed him gently back, talking to him all the time, and by a slow but uninterrupted movement reached the further end of the great bridge. There an Austrian officer was about to set a light to the inflammable matter; his match was snatched from his hands, and he was told that if he committed such a crime it would be the worse for him. Meantime the column of Oudinot's grenadiers appeared, and got well on to the bridge, the Austrian gunners were about to fire; the French marshals ran towards the commander of artillery and repeated their

assurance that an armistice had been concluded; then, sitting down on the guns, they begged the artillerymen to inform General Auersperg of their presence. In course of time he came up, and was on the point of giving the order to fire, although the French grenadiers were by this time surrounding the Austrian batteries and battalions. But the two marshals assured him there was a treaty, and that its first condition was that the French should occupy the bridges. The unhappy general, fearing to get himself into trouble if he shed blood needlessly, lost his head so far as to withdraw, taking with him all the troops which had been given to him to defend the bridges. Without this blunder on the part of General Auersperg, the passage of the Danube would certainly not have been executed without great difficulty; it might even have turned out impracticable; in which case, Napoleon would have been unable to follow the Russian and Austrian armies into Moravia, and his campaign would have failed. He certainly thought so then, and his opinion was confirmed four years later, when, in 1809, the Austrians did burn the bridges over the Danube, and to win the passage of the river we were compelled to fight the two battles of Essling and Wagram at a cost of more than 30,000 men; while in 1805 Marshals Lannes and Murat carried the bridges without having a man wounded. But was the stratagem which they employed permissible? I think not. I know that in time of war people stretch their consciences under the pretext that everything which assures victory may be done, in order to diminish the loss of life, and at the same time gain an advantage to one's country. Still, in spite of these weighty considerations, I do not think that one ought to approve the means employed to get possession of the bridge of Spitz. For my part, I should not like to do the same under similar circumstances.

To conclude this episode I may say that General Auersperg was severely punished for his credulity. A court-martial condemned him to be degraded, to be dragged on a hurdle through the streets of Vienna, and finally to be put to death by the hand of the executioner. The same judgment was pronounced against Field-Marshal Mack for his conduct at Ulm. Both, however, obtained a commutation of the capital sentence to that of imprisonment for life. They were released at the end of ten years, but deprived of their military rank, expelled from the nobility, and repudiated by their families. They both died soon after having regained their freedom.

The stratagem of Lannes and Murat having secured the passage of the Danube, the Emperor marched his army in pursuit of the Austrians and Russians. Herewith begins the second phase of the campaign.

The Russian Marshal Kutusoff was marching from Krems by Hollabrunn to Brunn in Moravia, to join the second army, which the Emperor Alexander was leading in person ; but on getting near Hollabrunn he learnt with consternation that the divisions of Murat and Lannes were already in possession of that town, and his retreat thereby entirely cut off. To get himself out of this fix, employing a trick in his turn, he sent General Prince Bagration with a flag of truce to Murat, to assure him that an aide-de-camp of his Emperor had just concluded an armistice at Vienna with the Emperor Napoleon, and that peace would without doubt shortly follow. Prince Bagration was a most agreeable man ; he knew so well how to flatter Murat that the latter, taken in in his turn by the Russian general, eagerly accepted the armistice in spite of the remarks of Lannes, who wished to fight. But Murat was the superior officer, and Lannes had to obey.

The suspension of hostilities lasted thirty-six hours, and while Murat was inhaling the incense which the cunning Russian lavished on him, Kutusoff's army by a roundabout march, concealed behind a barrier of low hills, escaped the danger, passed Hollabrunn, and took up a strong position by which the road to Moravia was opened to it, and its retreat, as well as its junction with the other Russian army, posted between Znaim and Brunn, was assured. Napoleon was then at the palace of Schonbrunn. He fell into a great rage on learning that Murat had let himself be taken in by Prince Bagration, and had ventured to accept an armistice without orders, and directed him to attack Kutusoff forthwith. But the Russians had changed their position very much for the better, and gave the French a vigorous reception. The fight was of the most obstinate nature, but at length the town of Hollabrunn, captured and recaptured several times, set on fire by shells, filled with dead and dying, remained in possession of the French. The Russians retired on Brunn ; our troops followed and occupied that town without fighting, though it was fortified and commanded by the celebrated citadel of Spielberg

The Russian armies and part of the remains of the Austrian troops being assembled in Moravia, the Emperor, in order to

strike a final blow, proceeded to Brunn. My comrade Massy and I followed him in that direction, but we got along slowly and with much difficulty; first because the post-horses were on their last legs, and further, by reason of the great quantity of troops, guns, artillery and baggage wagons which cumbered the roads. We were obliged to wait twenty-four hours at Hollabrunn, until the way was cleared through its streets destroyed by fire, and still full of burning planks, beams, and fragments of furniture. This unlucky town had been so completely burnt that we could not find a single house to take shelter in. During our compulsory stay in the place we were appalled by a horrible spectacle. The wounded, especially the Russians, had during the fight taken refuge in the houses, where they were soon overtaken by the fire. At the approach of this new danger all who were able to move had fled; but many, wounded in the legs or otherwise severely injured, had been burnt alive under the ruins. Some had endeavoured to escape by crawling on the ground, but the fire had pursued them into the streets, and one might see thousands of the poor fellows half reduced to ashes; some of them were even yet breathing. The corpses of men and horses killed in the fight had also been roasted, so that from the unhappy town of Hollabrunn emanated a horrible and sickening odour of roasted flesh, perceptible at some leagues' distance.

Major Massy and I left this focus of disease as soon as we could, and reached Znaym, where four years afterwards I was to be wounded. Finally we came up with the Emperor at Brunn on November 22, ten days before the battle of Austerlitz.

The day after our arrival we discharged our commission, and handed over the flags with the ceremonial prescribed by the Emperor for occasions of the kind, for he never lost any opportunity of exalting in the eyes of the troops whatever would stimulate their passion for glory. The ceremony was as follows. Half an hour before the parade, which took place at eleven o'clock each day in front of the Emperor's quarters, General Duroc, the grand marshal, sent to our lodging a company of grenadiers of the guard with their band and drums. The seventeen colours and two standards were placed in the hands of as many sergeants. Major Massy and I, preceded by an orderly officer, placed ourselves at the head of the procession, which set out with the band playing. The town was full of French troops, and as we passed the soldiers cheered loudly in honour of the victory gained by their comrades of the 7th corps. All the sentries saluted, and as we entered

the court of the house where the Emperor lodged, the bands played a march, the troops assembled for parade, presented arms and enthusiastically shouted "Vive l'Empereur!"

The orderly aide-de-camp came forward to receive us, and presented us to the Emperor, together with the sergeants who carried the Austrian flags. The Emperor inspected the various trophies, and after having dismissed the sergeants, he questioned us freely, both with regard to the battle which Augereau had fought, and upon our observations during the long journey which we had just made through the countries which had been the seat of war. Then he bade us wait his orders and follow the imperial head-quarters. Marshal Duroc gave us, as was customary, a receipt for the flags, then informed us that horses would be placed at our disposal, and invited us during our stay to take our seats at the table where he presided.

Meanwhile the great drama was approaching its final scene, and both sides were preparing to fight their stoutest. Most military authors are apt to confuse the reader's mind by overcrowding their story with details. So much is this the case that, in the greater part of the works published on the wars of the Empire, I have been utterly unable to understand the history of many battles at which I was present, and of which all the phases were well known to me. In order to preserve due clearness in relating a military action, I think one ought to be content with indicating the respective conditions of the two armies before the engagement, and reporting only such facts as affected the decision. That is what I shall try to do in order to give you an idea of the battle of Austerlitz, as it is called, though it took place short of the village of that name. On the eve of the battle, however, the Emperors of Austria and Russia had slept at the château of Austerlitz, and when Napoleon drove them from this, he wished to heighten his triumph by giving that name to the battle.

You will see on any map that the Goldbach brook, which rises on the other side of the Olmütz road, falls into the small lake of Mönitz. This stream, flowing at the bottom of a little valley with pretty steep sides, separated the two armies. The Austro-Russian right rested on a hanging wood in rear of the Posoritz post-house beyond the Olmütz road; their centre occupied Pratzen and the wide plateau of that name; their left was near the pools of Satschan and the swampy ground in their neighbourhood. The Emperor Napoleon rested his left on a



hillock difficult of access, to which the Egyptian soldiers gave the name of the "Santon," because it had on the top a little chapel with a spire like a minaret. The French centre was near the marsh of Kobelnitz, the right was at Telnitz. But at this point the Emperor had placed very few people, in order to draw the Russians on to the marshy ground, where he had arranged to defeat them by concealing Davout's corps at Gross Raigern, on the Vienna road.

On the 1st of December, the day before the battle, Napoleon left Brunn early in the morning, spent the whole day in inspecting the positions, and in the evening fixed his head-quarters in rear of the French centre, at a point whence the view took in the bivouacs of both sides, as well as the ground which was to be their field of battle next day. There was no other building in the place than a poor barn. The Emperor's tables and maps were placed there, and he established himself in person by an immense fire, surrounded by his numerous staff and his guard. Fortunately there was no snow, and though it was very cold, I lay on the ground and went soundly to sleep. But we were soon obliged to remount and go the rounds with the Emperor. There was no moon, and the darkness of the night was increased by a thick fog which made progress very difficult. The chasseurs of the escort had the idea of lighting torches made of pine branches and straw, which proved very useful. The troops, seeing a group of horsemen thus lighted come towards them, had no difficulty in recognizing the imperial staff, and in an instant, as if by enchantment, we could see along the whole line all our bivouac fires lighted up by thousands of torches in the hands of the soldiers. The cheers with which, in their enthusiasm, they saluted Napoleon, were all the more animated for the fact that the morrow was the anniversary of his coronation, and the coincidence seemed of good omen. The enemies must have been a good deal surprised when, from the top of a neighbouring hill, they saw in the middle of the night 60,000 torches lighted, and heard a thousand times repeated the cry of "Long live the Emperor!" accompanied by the sound of the many bands of the French regiments. In our camp all was joy, light, and movement, while on the side of the Austrians and Russians all was gloom and silence.

Next day, December 2nd, the sound of cannon was heard at daybreak. As we have seen, the Emperor had shown but few troops on his right; this was a trap for the enemy, with the view

of allowing them to capture Telnitz easily, to cross the Goldbach there, then to go on to Gross Raigern and take possession of the road from Brunn to Vienna, thinking to cut off our retreat. The Russians and Austrians fell into the snare perfectly, for, weakening the rest of their line, they clumsily crowded considerable forces into the bottom of Telnitz, and into the swampy valleys bordering on the pools of Satschan and Mönitz. But as they imagined, for some not very apparent reason, that Napoleon had the intention of retreating without delivering battle, they resolved, by way of completing their success, to attack us on our left towards the "Santon," and also on our centre before Puntowitz. By this means our defeat would be complete when we had been forced back on these two points, and found the road to Vienna occupied in our rear by the Russians. As it befell, however, on our left Marshal Lannes not only repulsed all the attacks of the enemy upon the "Santon," but drove him back on the other side of the Olmutz road as far as Blasiowitz. There the ground became more level, and allowed Murat's cavalry to execute some brilliant charges, the results of which were of great importance, for the Russians were driven out of hand as far as the village of Austerlitz.

While this splendid success was being won by our left wing, the centre, consisting of the troops under Soult and Bernadotte, which the Emperor had posted at the bottom of the Goldbach ravine, where it was concealed by a thick fog, dashed forwards towards the hill on which stands the village of Pratzen. This was the moment when that brilliant sun of Austerlitz, the recollection of which Napoleon so delighted to recall, burst forth in all its splendour. Marshal Soult carried not only the village of Pratzen, but also the vast tableland of that name, which was the culminating point of the whole country, and consequently the key of the battlefield. There, under the Emperor's eyes, the sharpest of the fighting took place, and the Russians were beaten back. But one battalion, the 4th of the line, of which Prince Joseph, Napoleon's brother, was colonel, allowing itself to be carried too far in pursuit of the enemy, was charged and broken up by the Noble Guard and the Grand Duke Constantine's cuirassiers, losing its eagle. Several lines of Russian cavalry quickly advanced to support this momentary success of the guards, but Napoleon hurled against them the Mamelukes, the mounted chasseurs, and the mounted grenadiers of his guard, under Marshal Bessières and General Rapp. The *mêlée* was of

the most sanguinary kind ; the Russian squadrons, were crushed and driven back beyond the village of Austerlitz with immense loss. Our troopers captured many colours and prisoners, among the latter Prince Repnin, commander of the Noble Guard. This regiment, composed of the most brilliant of the young Russian nobility, lost heavily, because the swagger in which they had indulged against the French having come to the ears of our soldiers, these, and above all the mounted grenadiers, attacked them with fury, shouting as they passed their great sabres through their bodies : " We will give the ladies of St. Petersburg something to cry for ! "

The painter Gérard, in his picture of the battle of Austerlitz, has taken for his subject the moment when General Rapp, coming wounded out of the fight, and covered with his enemies' blood and his own, is presenting to the Emperor the flags just captured and his prisoner, Prince Repnin. I was present at this imposing spectacle, which the artist has reproduced with wonderful accuracy. All the heads are portraits, even that of the brave chasseur who, making no complaint, though he had been shot through the body, had the courage to come up to the Emperor and fall stone dead as he presented the standard which he had just taken. Napoleon, wishing to honour his memory, ordered the painter to find a place for him in his composition. In the picture may be seen also a Mameluke, who is carrying in one hand an enemy's flag and holds in the other the bridle of his dying horse. This man, named Mustapha, was well known in the guard for his courage and ferocity. During the charge he had pursued the Grand Duke Constantine, who only got rid of him by a pistol-shot, which severely wounded the Mameluke's horse. Mustapha, grieved at having only a standard to offer to the Emperor, said in his broken French as he presented it : " Ah, if me catch Prince Constantine, me cut him head off and bring it to Emperor ! " Napoleon, disgusted, replied : " Will you hold your tongue, you savage ? "

While Marshals Lannes, Soult, and Murat, with the imperial guard, were beating the right and centre of the allied army, and driving them back beyond the village of Austerlitz, the enemy's left, falling into the trap laid by Napoleon when he made a show of keeping close to the pools, threw itself on the village of Telnitz, captured it, and, crossing the Goldbach, prepared to occupy the road to Vienna. But the enemy had taken a false prognostic of Napoleon's genius when they supposed him capable

of committing such a blunder as to leave undefended a road by which, in the event of disaster, his retreat was secured ; for our right was guarded by the divisions under Davout, concealed in the rear in the little town of Gross Reigen. From this point Davout fell upon the allies at the moment when he saw their masses entangled in the defiles between the lakes of Telnitz and Monitz, and the stream.

The Emperor, whom we left on the plateau of Pratzen, having freed himself from the enemy's right and centre, which were in flight on the other side of Austerlitz, descended from the heights of Pratzen with a small force of all arms, including Soult's corps and his guard, and went with all speed towards Telnitz, and took the enemy's columns in rear at the moment when Davout was attacking in front. At once the heavy masses of Austrians and Russians, packed on the narrow roadways which lead beside the Goldbach brook, finding themselves between two fires, fell into an indescribable confusion. All ranks were mixed up together, and each sought to save himself by flight. Some hurled themselves headlong into the marshes which border the pools, but our infantry followed them there. Others hoped to escape by the road that lies between the two pools ; our cavalry charged them, and the butchery was frightful. Lastly, the greater part of the enemy, chiefly Russians, sought to pass over the ice. It was very thick, and five or six thousand men, keeping some kind of order, had reached the middle of the Satschan lake, when Napoleon, calling up the artillery of his guard, gave the order to fire on the ice. It broke at countless points, and a mighty cracking was heard. The water, oozing through the fissures, soon covered the floes, and we saw thousands of Russians, with their horses, guns, and wagons, slowly settle down into the depths. It was a horribly majestic spectacle which I shall never forget. In an instant the surface of the lake was covered with everything that could swim. Men and horses struggled in the water amongst the floes. Some—a very small number—succeeded in saving themselves by the help of poles and ropes, which our soldiers reached to them from the shore, but the greater part were drowned.

The number of combatants at the Emperor's disposal in this battle was 68,000 men ; that of the allied army amounted to 82,000 men. Our loss in killed and wounded was about 8,000 men ; our enemies admitted that theirs, in killed, wounded, and drowned, reached 14,000. We had made 18,000 prisoners,

captured 150 guns, and a great quantity of standards and colours.

After giving the order to pursue the enemy in every direction, the Emperor betook himself to his new head-quarters at the post-house of Posoritz on the Olmutz road. As may be imagined, he was radiant, but frequently expressed regret that the very eagle we had lost should have belonged to the 4th regiment of the line, of which his brother Joseph was colonel, and should have been captured by the regiment of the Grand Duke Constantine, brother of the Emperor of Russia. The coincidence was, in truth, rather quaint, and made the loss more noticeable. But Napoleon soon received great consolation. Prince John of Lichtenstein came from the Emperor of Austria to request an interview, and Napoleon, understanding that this would result in a peace and would deliver him from the fear of seeing the Prussians march on his rear before he was clear of his present enemy, granted it.

Of all the divisions of the French imperial guard, it was the mounted chasseurs who suffered the heaviest loss in their great charge against the Russian guard on the Pratzen plateau. My poor friend, Captain Fournier, had been killed, and General Morland too. The Emperor, always on the look-out for anything that might kindle the spirit of emulation among the troops, decided that General Morland's body should be placed in the memorial building which he proposed to erect on the Esplanade des Invalides at Paris. The surgeons, having neither the time nor the materials necessary to embalm the general's body on the battle-field, put it into a barrel of rum, which was transported to Paris. But subsequent events having delayed the construction of the monument destined for General Morland, the barrel in which he had been placed was still standing in one of the rooms of the School of Medicine when Napoleon lost the Empire in 1814. Not long afterwards the barrel broke through decay, and people were much surprised to find that the rum had made the general's moustaches grow to such an extraordinary extent that they fell below his waist. The corpse was in perfect preservation, but, in order to get possession of it, the family was obliged to bring an action against some scientific man who had made a curiosity of it. Cultivate the love of glory and go and get killed, to let some oaf of a naturalist set you up in his library between a rhinoceros horn and a stuffed crocodile!

I did not receive any wound at the battle of Austerlitz, though

I was often in a very exposed position ; notably at the time of the cavalry *mêlée* on the Pratzen plateau. The Emperor had sent me with orders to General Rapp, whom I succeeded with great difficulty in reaching in the middle of that terrible hurly-burly of slaughterers and slaughtered. My horse came in contact with that of one of the Noble Guard, and our sabres were on the point of crossing, when we were forced apart by the combatants, and I got off with a severe contusion. But the next day I incurred a much greater danger of a very different kind from those with which one ordinarily meets on the field of battle. It happened in this way. On the morning of the 3rd, the Emperor mounted and rode round the different positions where the fights of the day before had taken place. Having reached the shores of the Satschan lake, Napoleon dismounted, and was chatting with several marshals round a camp fire, when he saw floating a hundred yards from the embankment a large isolated ice floe, on which was stretched a poor Russian non-commissioned officer with a decoration. The poor fellow could not help himself, having got a bullet through his thigh, and his blood had stained the ice floe which supported him. It was a horrible sight. Seeing a numerous staff surrounded by guards, the man judged that Napoleon must be there ; he raised himself as well as he could, and cried out that as soldiers of all countries became brothers when the fight was over, he begged his life of the powerful Emperor of the French. Napoleon's interpreter having translated this entreaty, he was touched by it, and ordered General Bertrand, his aide-de-camp, to do what he could to save the poor man. Straightway several men of the escort, and even two staff officers, seeing two great tree-stems on the bank, pushed them into the water, and then, getting astride of them, they thought that by moving their legs simultaneously they would drive these pieces of wood forward. But scarcely were they a fathom from the edge than they rolled over, throwing into the water the men who bestrode them. Their clothes were saturated in a moment, and as it was freezing very hard, the cloth of their sleeves and their trousers became stiff as they swam, and their limbs, shut up, as it were, in cases, could not move, so that several came near to being drowned, and they only got back to land with great difficulty, by the help of ropes which were thrown to them.

I bethought me then of saying that the swimmers ought to have stripped ; in the first place, to preserve their freedom of movement, and secondly, to avoid having to pass the night

in wet clothes. General Bertrand having heard this repeated it to the Emperor, who declared that I was right and that the others had shown more zeal than discretion. I do not wish to make myself out better than I am, so I will admit that just having taken part in a battle where I had seen thousands of dead and dying, the edge had been taken off my sensibility, and I did not feel philanthropic enough to run the risk of a bad cold by contesting with the ice floes the life of an enemy. I felt quite content with deploring his sad fate. But the Emperor's answer piqued me, and it seemed to me that I should be open to ridicule if I gave advice and did not dare to carry it into execution. So I leapt from my horse, and stripped myself naked and dashed into the water. I had gone fast in the course of the day and got hot, so that the chill struck me keenly, but I was young and vigorous and a good swimmer; the Emperor's presence encouraged me, and I struck out towards the Russian sergeant. At the same time my example, and probably the praise given me by the Emperor, determined a lieutenant of artillery, by name Roumestain, to imitate me.

While he was undressing I was advancing, but with a good deal more difficulty than I had foreseen. The older and stronger ice, which had been smashed to pieces the day before, had almost entirely disappeared, but a new skin had formed some lines in thickness, the sharp edges of which scratched the skin of my arms, breast, and neck in a very unpleasant fashion. The artillery officer, who had caught me up half-way, had not perceived it at all, having profited by the path which I had opened in the new ice. He called my attention to this fact, and generously demanded to be allowed to take his turn at leading, to which I agreed, for I was cruelly cut up. At last we reached the huge floe of old ice on which the poor Russian was lying, and thought that the most laborious part of our enterprise was achieved. There we were quite wrong, for as soon as we began to push the floe forward the layer of new ice which covered the surface of the water, being broken by contact with it, piled itself up in front, so as in a short time to form a mass which not only resisted our efforts, but began to break the edges of the big floe. The bulk of this got smaller every moment, and we began to fear that the poor man whom we were trying to save would be drowned before our eyes. The edges, moreover, of the floe were remarkably sharp, so that we had to choose spots on which to rest our hands and our chests as we pushed. We were at our last gasp. Finally, by way of a

crowning stroke, as we got near the bank the ice split in several places, and the portion on which the Russian lay was reduced to a slab only a few feet in breadth, quite insufficient to bear his weight. He was on the point of sinking when my comrade and I, feeling bottom at length, slipped our shoulders under the ice slab, and bore it to the shore. They threw us ropes, which we fastened round the Russian, and he was at last hoisted on to the beach. We had to use the same means to get out of the water, for we were wearied, torn, bruised, and bleeding, and could hardly stand. My kind comrade Massy, who had watched me with the greatest anxiety throughout my swim, had been so thoughtful as to have his horse-cloth warmed before the camp fire, and as soon as I was out of the water he wrapped me in it. After a good rub down I put on my clothes and wanted to stretch out by the fire, but this Dr. Larrey forbade, and ordered me to walk about, to do which I required the help of two chasseurs. The Emperor came and congratulated the artillery lieutenant and me on our courage in undertaking and achieving the rescue of the wounded Russian, and calling his Mameluke Roustan, who always carried refreshments with him on his horse, he poured us out a glass of excellent rum, and asked us, laughing, how we had liked our bath. As for the Russian sergeant, the Emperor directed Dr. Larrey to attend to him, and gave him several pieces of gold. He was fed and put into dry clothes, and after being wrapped in warm rugs, he was taken to a house in Telnitz which was used as an ambulance, and transferred the next day to the hospital at Brunn. The poor lad blessed the Emperor as well as M. Roumestain and me, and would kiss our hands. He was a Lithuanian, a native, that is, of a province of the old Poland now joined to Russia. As soon as he was well he declared that he would never serve any other than the Emperor Napoleon, so he returned to France with our wounded and was enrolled in the Polish legion. Ultimately he became a sergeant in the lancers of the guard, and whenever I came across him he testified his gratitude in broken, but expressive, language.

My icy bath, and the really superhuman efforts which I had had to make to save the poor man, might have cost me dear if I had been less young and vigorous. M. Roumestain, who did not possess the latter advantage to the same extent as I, was seized that same evening with violent congestion of the lungs, and had to be taken to the hospital, where he passed several months between life and death. He never, indeed, recovered completely,



and had to leave the service invalided some years later. As for myself, though I was very weak, I got myself hoisted on to my horse when the Emperor left the lake to go to the château of Austerlitz, where his head-quarters now were. Napoleon always went at a gallop, and in my shaken state this pace did not suit me ; still, I kept up, because the night was coming on and I was afraid of straying ; besides which, if I had gone at a walk the cold would have got hold of me. When I reached the château it took several men to help me to dismount, a shivering fit seized me, my teeth were chattering and I was quite ill. Colonel Dahlmann, lieutenant-colonel of the mounted chasseurs, who had just been promoted to general in place of Morland, took me into one of the outbuildings of the château, where he and his officers were established. After having given me some very hot tea, his surgeon rubbed me all over with warm oil ; they swaddled me in many rugs and stuck me into a great heap of hay, leaving only my face outside. Gradually a pleasant warmth penetrated my numbed limbs. I slept sound, and thanks to all this kind care, as well as to my twenty-three years, I found myself next morning fresh and in good condition, and was able to mount my horse and witness an extremely interesting spectacle.

The defeat which the Russians had undergone had thrown their army into such disorder that all who escaped the disaster of Austerlitz made haste to reach Galicia and get out of the victor's power. The rout was complete ; we took many prisoners and found the roads covered with deserted cannon and baggage. The Emperor of Russia, who had made sure of victory, went away in hopeless grief, authorizing his ally Francis II to make terms with Napoleon. On the very evening of the battle, the Emperor of Austria, to save his country from utter ruin, begged an interview of the French Emperor, and Napoleon agreeing, had halted at the village of Nasiedlowitz. The interview took place on the 4th, near the mill of Poleny, between the French and Austrian lines. I was present at this memorable meeting. Napoleon, starting very early from the château with his staff, was the first at the place of meeting. He dismounted and was strolling about when, seeing the Emperor of Austria approaching, he went towards him and embraced him cordially. A strange sight for the philosopher to reflect on ! An Emperor of Germany come to humble himself by suing for peace to the son of a small Corsican family, not long ago a sub-lieutenant of artillery, whom his talents, his good fortune, and the courage of the French

soldier had raised to the summit of power, and made the arbiter of the destinies of Europe !

Napoleon took no unfair advantage of the Austrian Emperor's position, so far as we could judge from the distance at which respect kept us. He was kind and courteous in the extreme. An armistice was concluded, and it was arranged that plenipotentiaries should be sent by both parties to Brunn to negotiate a treaty of peace. The Emperors embraced again at parting, and returned to their respective quarters. During the next two days, Napoleon admitted Major Massy and myself to a farewell audience, charging us to report to Marshal Augereau what we had seen. At the same time the Emperor handed us despatches for the Bavarian Court, which had returned to Munich, and informed us that Augereau had left Bregenz and that we should find him at Ulm. We got back to Vienna and continued our journey, travelling night and day in spite of the snow, which had begun to fall thickly.

## CHAPTER XI

*WE PASSED* part of the winter at Darmstadt in gaieties of all kinds. The grand ducal troops were commanded by a general of much merit, Von Stoch. He had a son of my own age, a lieutenant in the guards—a delightful young man, with whom I became very intimate, and of whom I shall have more to say. We were only ten leagues from Frankfort, still a free town, and very wealthy ; from of old the nest of all the intrigues against France, and the source of all the false news circulated in Germany to our injury. Accordingly, on the day after the battle of Austerlitz, when a report had got about that a battle had been fought of which the result was not yet known, the Frankforters were certain that the Russians had won ; several newspapers went so far in their hatred as to say that our army had suffered to the extent that not a Frenchman had escaped. The Emperor, who got reports of everything, took no notice, until, foreseeing the possibility of a breach with Prussia, he began gradually to move his armies near to the frontier of that kingdom. Then, with the view of punishing the Frankforters for their impertinence, he ordered Marshal Augereau to leave Darmstadt at short notice, and quarter himself with his whole army corps on Frankfort and the neighbourhood. The Emperor's order required, further,

that on the day of the entry of our troops the town was, in token of welcome, to give one louis-d'or to every private, two to the corporals, three to the sergeants, ten to the sub-lieutenants, and so forth. Moreover, the inhabitants were to lodge the troops and board them at the following rates—six hundred francs a day for the marshal, four hundred for lieutenant-generals, two hundred for major-generals, one hundred for colonels; and every month the state was to send a million francs to the Imperial Treasury at Paris.

The authorities of Frankfort, terrified at so exorbitant a demand, hastened to the French envoy; but he, primed beforehand by Napoleon, replied: "You asserted that not a single Frenchman had escaped the sword of the Russians; the Emperor Napoleon wished therefore to put you in a position to count the number composing a single corps of the Grand Army; there are six more of the same strength, and the Guard is coming presently." This answer, when repeated to the inhabitants, filled them with consternation. Vast as their wealth was, they must be ruined if this state of things lasted for long. But Marshal Augereau appealed in their favour to the Emperor's clemency, and received permission to act as he pleased. In this way he took upon himself to retain only his staff and one battalion in the city; the other troops were distributed among the neighbouring states. From that time joy returned, and the inhabitants, to show their gratitude to the marshal, entertained him frequently. I lodged with a rich banker, named Chamot, who, during the eight months I stayed with him, was most kind to me, as were all his household.

While we were at Frankfort a sad mishap which befell an officer of the 7th division was the cause of my being sent on a twofold errand, the first part of which was unpleasant enough, while the second was agreeable and even splendid. As the result of a brain fever, Lieutenant N——, of the 7th chasseurs, fell into a complete state of childishness. Marshal Augereau assigned to me the duty of taking the poor young man, first, to Paris, to see Murat, who had always taken an interest in him; then, if Murat wished it, to the Quercy. As I had not seen my mother since I set out for the campaign of Austerlitz, and as I knew that she was not far from Saint-Céré, at the château of Bras, which my father had bought some time before his death, I accepted with pleasure a mission which, while enabling me to be of service to Marshal Murat, would allow me to pass some

days with my mother. The marshal sent me a good carriage, and I took the road to Paris. But the heat and want of sleep excited my poor companion to such a degree that, passing from idiocy to raving madness, he went near to kill me with a blow from a coach-wrench. Never did I have a more unpleasant journey. At last I reached Paris, and brought Lieutenant N—— to Murat, who resided during the summer at the château of Neuilly. The marshal begged me to complete my task, and to take N—— to the Quercy. I agreed in the hope of seeing my mother ; but observed that I could not start for twenty-four hours, since Marshal Angereau had entrusted me with despatches for the Emperor, and I was going to Rambouillet to find him. I went thither in pursuance of my orders that very day.

I do not know what were the contents of the despatches which I bore, but they made the Emperor very thoughtful. He sent for M. de Talleyrand, and went off with him to Paris, ordering me to follow, and to present myself that evening to Marshal Duroc. I obeyed, and waited for a long time in one of the rooms of the Tuileries, till Duroc, coming out of the Emperor's study and leaving the door ajar, gave directions in a loud voice for an orderly officer to get ready to start by the post on a distant mission. But Napoleon called out : " Duroc, that is unnecessary, for we have got Marbot here going back to Angereau ; he can go on to Berlin ; Frankfort is half-way there." Accordingly, Duroc instructed me to get ready to go to Berlin with the Emperor's despatches. I was annoyed, because I must give up going to see my mother ; but I had to resign myself. I hastened to Neuilly, to let Murat know ; and as for my own affairs, thinking that my new mission was very urgent, I returned to the Tuileries, but Duroc allowed me till the next morning. I turned up at dawn, and was put off till the evening ; in the evening again till next morning, and so on for eight days. Still, I bore it with patience, because each time that I appeared Duroc only kept me a moment, which allowed me to go about in Paris. He had handed me a pretty large sum of money in order to set myself up in entirely new uniforms, so that I might make a good appearance before the King of Prussia, into whose hands I was myself to give the Emperor's letter. You see that Napoleon overlooked no detail when it was a question of raising the French army in the eyes of foreigners.

I got off at last, after receiving the despatches and instructions from the Emperor bidding me take special note of the

Prussian troops, their bearing, their arms, horses, and so on. M. de Talleyrand gave me a packet for M. Laforest, our ambassador at Berlin, with whom I was to stay. On reaching Mainz, which was then in French territory, I learnt that Marshal Augereau was at Wiesbaden. I went there and surprised him much by telling him that I was going to Berlin by the Emperor's order. Travelling night and day in splendid July weather, I reached Berlin somewhat tired. In those days the roads in Prussia were not metalled, and one rolled along, nearly always at a walk, on shifting sand, into which the wheels sank deep and raised intolerable clouds of dust.

M. Laforest received me most kindly. I put up at the Embassy, and was presented to the King and Queen, and the princes and princesses. The King displayed much emotion on receiving the Emperor's letter. He was a tall and fine man, with a face expressing much kindness, but lacking in the animation which indicates a strong character. The Queen was in truth very handsome, but disfigured by the thick wrapping which she always wore round her neck—it was said, to conceal a decided goitre, which, through medical maltreatment, had become an open sore. Her figure was full of grace, and her countenance, at once bright and dignified, expressed strength of will. I was most graciously received; and as it was a month before the answer which I had to take back to the Emperor was ready—so difficult, it seems, was it to settle—the Queen was kind enough to invite me to all the balls and parties which she gave during my stay. Thus I passed my time at Berlin very pleasantly, and our ambassador paid me every attention; but in course of time I perceived that he wished to make me play in a delicate affair a part which would have been improper for me, and I had to adopt an attitude of reserve.

But let us consider a little Prussia's position with regard to Napoleon, with which, as I learnt later on, the despatches which I brought had much to do. By accepting from Napoleon the gift of the Electorate of Hanover, an hereditary possession of the family now reigning in England, the Cabinet of Berlin had alienated not only the anti-French party, but almost the whole Prussian nation. German self-esteem was offended by the successes gained by the French over the Austrians, and Prussia feared, besides, to see her commerce ruined in consequence of the war which the Cabinet of London had just declared upon her. The Queen and Prince Lewis sought to profit by this excitement in

bringing the King to join Russia, which though deserted by Austria, still had hopes of taking revenge for Austerlitz, and to go to war with France. The Emperor Alexander was still supported in his plans against France by his favourite aide-de-camp, the Polish Prince Czartoryski. Still the anti-French party, though increasing every day, had not yet succeeded in deciding the King of Prussia to break with Napoleon, but, finding itself supported by Russia, it redoubled its efforts. It was clever enough to profit by Napoleon's mistakes in placing his brother Lewis on the throne of Holland, and nominating himself Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine—an act which was represented to the King of Prussia as a step towards re-establishing Charlemagne's Empire. Napoleon, they said, would end by making all the sovereigns of Germany come down to the rank of his vassals. Exaggerated as these assertions were, they yet produced a great revolution in the King's mind, and from that time his conduct towards France became so equivocal that Napoleon decided to write to him with his own hand, regardless of ordinary diplomatic efforts, to ask, Are you for or against me? Such was the drift of the letter which I had handed to the King. His council, wishing to gain time to arm, delayed the answer, which was what kept me so long at Berlin.

At length, in the month of August, a general explosion against France broke out, and the Queen, Prince Lewis, the nobility, the army, and the whole population cried out loudly for war. The King let himself be carried away, but since, although he had decided to break the peace, he still cherished a faint hope that hostilities might be avoided, it appears that in his answer he undertook to disarm if the Emperor would recall to France all the troops that he had in Germany. This Napoleon would not do until Prussia had disarmed, so that they were revolving in a vicious circle, from which war was the only escape.

Before my departure from Berlin I had evidence of the frenzy to which their hatred of Napoleon carried the Prussian nation, usually so calm. The officers whom I knew ventured no longer to speak to me or salute me; many Frenchmen were insulted by the populace; the men-at-arms of the Noble Guard pushed their swagger to the point of whetting their sword-blades on the stone steps of the French ambassador's house. In all haste I betook myself back to Paris, taking with me copious information on the state of affairs in Prussia. As I passed through Frankfort I found Marshal Augereau in much grief, having just heard of

the death of his wife, a good and excellent person, whom he deeply regretted and whose loss was felt by the whole staff, for she had been most kind to us.

When I got to Paris I gave the Emperor a reply in the King of Prussia's own hand. He read it, and questioned me on what I had seen and heard at Berlin. When I told him how the guardsmen had whetted their sabres on the steps of the French Embassy, he brought his hand to his sword-hilt, and indignantly exclaimed, "The insolent braggarts shall soon learn that our weapons need no sharpening!"

My mission being at an end, I returned to Marshal Augereau and passed the whole month of September at Frankfort. We prepared for war by getting all the amusement we could, for we thought that, nothing being more uncertain than soldiers' lives, they had better make haste to enjoy them.

Meanwhile, the different divisions of the Grand Army were concentrating on the banks of the Main. The Emperor had just reached Wurzburg, and his guard was crossing the Rhine. The Prussians on their side were marching, and on their way through Saxony had compelled the Elector to join his forces with theirs, this compulsory and therefore insecure alliance being the only one which the King of Prussia possessed in Germany. It was true he was expecting the Russians, but their army was still in Poland, behind the Niemen, more than 150 leagues from the country where the destiny of Prussia was to be decided. It is difficult to conceive the blundering which, during seven years, controlled the decisions of the Cabinets of states hostile to France. We have seen how, in 1805, the Austrians attacked us on the Danube, and allowed themselves to be beaten in detail at Ulm, instead of waiting till the Russians could join them and Prussia declare against Napoleon. Now, in 1806, we had these same Prussians, who a year before might, by joining them, have hindered the defeat of the Austrians and Russians, not only declaring war against us when we were at peace with the Cabinet of Vienna, but imitating its fault by attacking us without awaiting the Russians. Then, three years later, in 1809, the Austrians renewed the war against Napoleon single-handed, just when he was at peace with Prussia and Russia. This want of unanimity secured victory for France. Unhappily it was not so in 1813, when we were crushed by the coalition of our enemies.

The King of Prussia's mistake in 1806, in declaring war against Napoleon before the Russians had come up, was aggravated by

the fact that his troops, although well taught, were so badly organized that they were not fit to match themselves with ours. In fact, at this period a company or troop in Prussia was the property of its captain. Men, horses, arms, accoutrements, everything belonged to him. He farmed it at the price of a fixed sum paid to the Government. Thus, all losses being at their expense, it was to the interests of the captains to spare their companies, whether on the march or on the battlefield; and as the number of men which they were bound to have was fixed, they enrolled in the first place all the Prussians who presented themselves, and then all the vagabonds in Europe whom their agent's sergeants could enlist in the neighbouring states. But as this did not suffice, the Prussian recruiting sergeants carried off a great number of men by main force, and these having become soldiers without their own consent were bound to serve till they were past the age for service. Then they were given a beggar's licence, for Prussia was too poor to give them a hospital or retiring pension. During their period of service these soldiers were mingled with genuine Prussians, the number of whom had to be at least half of the strength of each company in order to prevent revolts.

To maintain an army compounded of such heterogeneous elements an iron discipline was needed, wherefore corporal punishment was inflicted for the slightest fault. The numerous non-commissioned officers, all Prussians, carried a cane, which they frequently used. According to the recognized saying, they reckoned one cane to every seven men. Among the foreign soldiers desertion was mercilessly punished with death. You may imagine the terrible position of these foreigners, who, having enlisted in a moment of drunkenness, or been carried off by force, found themselves far from their own country, and in a bitter climate, condemned to be Prussian soldiers—that is to say, slaves during their whole lives. And what lives they were! With scarcely food enough to keep them alive, sleeping on straw, very lightly clothed, no cloaks, even in the coldest winter, and with pay insufficient to meet their wants. Indeed they did not wait to beg until they had received licence to do so with their discharge, for when out of sight of their officers they would put out their hands. Both at Potsdam and Berlin it has happened more than once that grenadiers at the King's very gate have begged alms of me. The officers, for the most part, were educated and did their duty well; but half of them were foreigners, poor gentlemen from almost every country in Europe, who, having



taken service only to get a living, felt no patriotism or devotion towards Prussia. Naturally most of them deserted her when she was in trouble. Again, promotion going only by seniority, the great majority of the Prussian officers were old and worn out, and in no state to undergo the hardships of war. It was with an army thus composed and thus officered that the conquerors of Egypt, Italy, and Germany were to be withstood. Madness it was indeed, but the Cabinet of Berlin, misled by the victories which the great Frederick had gained with mercenary troops, thought that it was going to be the same thing again, forgetting that the times had greatly changed.

On October 6, Marshal Augereau and the 7th corps left Frankfurt to march towards the frontier of Saxony, of which the Prussians were already in occupation. It was a splendid autumn, a little frost at night and a brilliant sun by day. My little establishment was well organized. I had a good campaigning servant, François Woirland, an old soldier of the Black Legion, a regular swashbuckler and a grand marauder. But these make the best servants on campaign, for with them one never runs short of anything. I had three good horses, good accoutrements, a little money. I was very well in health, so I marched gaily to meet coming events.

Our road lay by Aschaffenburg, whence we went on to Würzburg. There we found the Emperor, who held a march-past of the troops of the 7th corps, amid great enthusiasm. Napoleon, who was in possession of notes about all the regiments, and knew how to use them cleverly so as to flatter the self-esteem of every one, said, when he saw the 44th of the line, "Of all the corps of my army you are the one where there are most stripes, so your three battalions count in my eyes for six." The soldiers replied with enthusiasm, "We will prove it before the enemy." To the 78th light infantry, composed mainly of men from Lower Languedoc and the Pyrenees, the Emperor said, "There are the best marchers in the army; one never sees a man of them fall out, especially when the enemy has to be met." Then he added, laughing, "But to do you justice in full, I must tell you that you are the greatest rowdies and looters in the army." "Quite true, quite true," answered the soldiers, every one of whom had a duck, fowl, or goose in his knapsack. This was an abuse which had to be tolerated, for Napoleon's armies, once on campaign, only received rations at rare intervals, each living on the country as best he could—a method which doubtless had great

inconvenience, but also one immense advantage · it allowed us to push constantly forward, without being hampered by provision wagons and stores. This gave us a great superiority over our enemies, whose movements depended on the baking or the arrival of bread, on the pace of herds, and the like.

We were now at no great distance from the Prussians, the King being at Erfurt. The Queen was with him, and rode about the army on horseback, seeking to kindle the men by her presence. Napoleon, conceiving that this was not a part befitting a princess, published in his bulletins some very insulting remarks about her. The French and Prussian outposts met at length on October 9, at Schleitz, and a slight engagement took place under the Emperor's eyes, where the enemy was beaten—an ill-omened commencement. On the same day, Prince Lewis, with a force of 10,000 men, was in position at Saalfeld, a town on the banks of the Saale in the middle of a plain, which is reached by crossing very steep hills. As the divisions of Lannes and Augereau had to advance on Saalfeld through these hills, if Prince Lewis wished to await the French, he should have taken up his position in that country, full as it was of narrow gorges where a few troops could stop much greater numbers. He neglected this advantage, however, probably owing to his persuasion that the Prussian troops were worth very much more than the French. He even carried his contempt of all precautions so far as to place part of his forces with a marshy brook in their rear, thus making their retreat in case of reverse very difficult. General Muller, an old Swiss officer in the Prussian service, whom the King had attached to his nephew in order to check his impetuosity made, indeed, some remarks to this effect, which Prince Lewis took in bad part, adding that there was no need of so many precautions to beat the French—it was enough to fall upon them as soon as they appeared.

They appeared on the morning of the 10th, Lannes' division leading; Augereau's, which followed, did not come up in time to take part in the battle. Nor was its presence required, Lannes' force being more than sufficient. Augereau, while waiting for his division to issue into the open ground, took up his position with his staff on a hillock, from which we had a perfect view of the plain and could follow with the eye all the turning points of the battle.

Prince Lewis might yet have fallen back on the Prussian force which was occupying Jena, but having been the prime instigator

of the war it seemed to him unseemly to retire without fighting. He was cruelly punished for his temerity. Marshal Lannes, cleverly taking advantage of the high ground under which Prince Lewis had so imprudently deployed his troops, first played upon them with artillery, and when they were shaken sent forward his masses of infantry, who, rapidly descending from the high ground, poured like a torrent on the Prussian battalions and broke them up in a moment. Prince Lewis, losing his head, and probably seeing the mistake he had made, tried to repair it by putting himself at the head of his cavalry, with which he impetuously charged the 9th and 10th Hussars. At first he gained a slight advantage, but our hussars, returning to the charge with fury, threw back the Prussian cavalry into the marshes, their infantry at the same time flying in confusion before ours. In the middle of the scuffle Prince Lewis found himself engaged hand-to-hand with a sergeant of the 10th Hussars, named Guindet. Being summoned to surrender, he answered with a sword-stroke which laid open the Frenchman's face, whereupon the other ran the prince through the body, killing him on the spot.

After the battle and the complete rout of the enemy the prince's body was recognized, and Marshal Lannes had it borne with due honour to the Castle of Saalfeld. There it was handed over to the princely family of that name, connected with the royal house of Prussia, with whom Prince Lewis had passed the previous day and evening in making merry over the coming of the French, and even, it was said, in giving a ball—and now he was brought back to them vanquished and slain ! I saw his body the next day, laid out on a marble table ; he was naked to the waist, still wearing his leather breeches and his boots, and seemed to sleep. He was indeed a handsome man. I could not refrain from sad reflections on the mutability of human affairs as I gazed on the remains of this young man, born on the steps of the throne, but lately so beloved and so powerful. The news of his death caused consternation in the enemy's army, and, indeed, throughout Prussia.

The 7th corps passed October 11 at Saalfeld. In the next two days we reached Kala, where we fell in with some fragments of the Prussian troops who had been beaten before Saalfeld. Marshal Augereau attacked them, but they offered little resistance, and laid down their arms. The marshal reckoned on sleeping at Kala, which is only three leagues from Jena, but just as night was falling the 7th corps received orders to proceed at once to the latter town, which the Emperor had entered without

opposition at the head of his guard and of Lannes' troops. The Prussians had abandoned the place in silence, but it had been set on fire, probably by some candles having been forgotten and left in stables, and part of the unhappy city was a prey to the spreading flames when Augereau's corps entered about midnight. It was sad to see the inhabitants, women and old men, half-clothed, carrying away their children and trying to escape destruction by flight, while our soldiers, whom their duty and the neighbourhood of the enemy did not allow to leave the ranks, remained impassible with shouldered arms, like people who made light of the fire in comparison with the dangers to which they were shortly to be exposed.

## CHAPTER XII

*THE TOWN* of Jena is commanded by a height called the Landgrafenberg, at the foot of which flows the Saale. This is very steep on the side towards Jena, and the only road there existing is that to Weimar through the Muhlthal, a long and difficult passage, the exit from which, covered by a little wood, was guarded by the Saxon troops in alliance with the Prussians. A cannon-shot in rear of them, part of the Prussian army was drawn up in line. The Emperor, being able to reach the enemy only by this passage, was prepared for heavy losses in attacking it, for it did not seem possible to turn the position. But Napoleon's lucky star, which still guided him, furnished him with an unexpected means. So far as I am aware no historian has spoken of it, but I can vouch for the fact.\*

As we have seen, the King of Prussia had compelled the Elector of Saxony to join forces with him. The Saxon people saw with regret that they were involved in a war which could bring them no advantage in the future, and which in the present was bringing ruin on their country. The Prussians were therefore detested in Saxony, and the Saxon town of Jena shared the feeling. A priest of the town, excited by the sight of the conflagration which was devouring it, and regarding the Prussians as the enemies of his sovereign and his country, thought he might give Napoleon

\*[Neither Thiers nor Lanfrey seem to have had any inkling of the way in which Napoleon learnt how to get his troops on to the Landgrafenberg.]

the means of driving them from the land by pointing out to him a little path which infantry could use to climb the steep sides of the Landgrafenberg. He therefore guided a detachment of voltigeurs and some staff officers to the place which the Prussians, thinking the passage impracticable, had omitted to guard. Napoleon however, took a different view, and on the strength of the report which the officers made went up there himself, accompanied by Marshal Lannes and guided by the Saxon parson. Having observed that between the highest point of the path and the plain which the enemy occupied there existed a little rocky platform, the Emperor resolved to assemble there a portion of his troops, who might issue from it as from a citadel to attack the Prussians. The difficulty of the task was such that no one but Napoleon, commanding Frenchmen, could have surmounted it, but he sent at once for 4,000 pioneering tools from the wagons of the engineers and artillery, and ordered that every battalion should work in turn for an hour at widening and levelling the path, and that as each finished its task it should go and form up silently on the Landgrafenberg, while another took its place. They were lighted at their work by torches, the light of which was concealed from the enemy's eyes by the blaze of Jena. The nights being long at this period of the year, we had time to make the climb accessible not only to the columns of infantry but even to the wagons and the artillery, so that before daylight the corps of Lannes and Soult, and Augereau's first division, together with the foot guards, were massed on the Landgrafenberg. The term *massed* was never more correct, for the breasts of the men of each regiment were almost touching the backs of those in front of them. But the troops were so well disciplined that, in spite of the darkness and the packing of more than 40,000 men on that narrow platform, there was not the least disorder, and although the enemy, who were occupying Cospoda and Closevitz, were only half a cannon-shot off, they perceived nothing.

On the morning of October 14 a thick fog covered the country and favoured our movements. Augereau's second division made a feigned attack, advancing from Jena through the Muhlthal by the Weimar road. Believing this to be the only point by which we could issue from Jena, the enemy had massed a considerable force there. But while he was preparing to defend the narrow passage with vigour, the Emperor Napoleon caused the troops which he had assembled on the Landgrafenberg during the night to debouch into the plain, and drew them up in order of battle.

The first cannon-shots, aided by a light breeze, dispersed the fog, the sun shone out brilliantly, and the Prussians were aghast at seeing the French army deployed in line in their front and advancing to the contest. They could not understand how we had arrived on the plateau while they believed us at the farther end of the Jena valley, with no other means of getting at them but the Weimar road, which they were carefully watching. We engaged without loss of time, and the first line of the Prussians and Saxons, under the Prince of Hohenlohe, was forced to give way. Their reserve was advancing, but we received a strong reinforcement on our side. Ney's corps and Murat's cavalry, which had been delayed in the defile, emerging into the plain, came into action. A Prussian army corps commanded by General Ruchel checked our columns for a moment, but it was charged by the French cavalry and almost annihilated, General Ruchel being killed.

Augereau's first division, on descending from the Landgrafenberg into the plain, joined the second arriving at the Muhlthal, and the corps following the road from Vienna to Weimar, captured Cospoda and then the wood of Iserstadt, while Lannes took Vierzehnheiligen, and Soult Hermstadt. The Prussian infantry fought badly and the cavalry did not do much better. We often saw it coming on with loud shouts, but, intimidated by the calm attitude of our battalions, it never dared to push the charge home. On getting within fifty paces of our line it would wheel about, pursued by a hail of bullets and the hoots of our soldiers. The Saxons fought with courage; they resisted Augereau's corps for a long time, and only after the retreat of the Prussian troops did they form in two great squares and begin to retire firing. Augereau, admiring the courage of the Saxons, and wishing to spare these brave fellows unnecessary bloodshed, sent a flag of truce to invite them to surrender, as they had no longer any hope of support. But just at that moment Prince Murat, coming up with his cavalry, launched his cuirassiers and dragoons on the Saxon squares; by their resolute charge they broke them and compelled them to lay down their arms. But the next day the Emperor let them go free and sent them back to their sovereign, with whom he lost no time in making peace.

The whole Prussian force retired completely routed along the Weimar road. The fugitives, with their artillery and baggage, were crowded at the gates of the city when the French appeared. Panic-stricken at the sight of them, the whole mob fled in the

greatest disorder, leaving a great number of prisoners, flags, guns and baggage in our hands.

I was not wounded at Jena, but I was taken in in a way which after forty years it still awakens my wrath to remember. At the moment when Augereau's corps was attacking the Saxons, the marshal sent me to General Durosnel, commanding a brigade of chasseurs, with orders to charge the enemy's cavalry. I was to guide the brigade by a road which I had already reconnoitred. I hastened to place myself at the head of our chasseurs, who were dashing on the Saxon squadrons. These latter resisted bravely, but after a short *mêlée* were compelled to retired with loss. Towards the end of the fight I found myself face to face with a hussar officer in the white uniform of Prince Albert of Saxony's regiment. I summoned him at the sabre's point to surrender, which he did by handing me his weapon. The combat over, I was generous enough to give it back to him, as is the practice in such cases between officers, and I added that, although by the laws of war his horse belonged to me, I did not wish to deprive him of it. He thanked me warmly and followed me in the direction which I was taking to return to the marshal, to whom I looked forward to presenting my prisoner. But as soon as we were 500 paces from the French chasseurs, the confounded Saxon officer, who was on my left, drew his sabre, laid open my horse's shoulder, and was on the point of striking me had I not thrown myself upon him, although I had not my sabre in my hand. But as our bodies were in contact he had not room to bring his blade to bear on me, seeing which he caught me by my epaulette—for I was in full uniform that day—and pulled hard enough to make me lose my balance. My saddle turned round, and there I was with one leg in the air and my head downwards, while the Saxon, going off at full gallop, returned to what remained of the enemy's army. I was furious both at the position in which I found myself and at the ingratitude with which the stranger repaid my kind treatment of him. So, as soon as the Saxon army was captured, I went to look for my hussar officer and give him a good lesson, but he had disappeared.

I have said that our new ally, the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, had united his troops to those of the Emperor. This brigade, which was attached to the 7th corps, had a uniform exactly like that of the Prussians, so that during the action many Hessians were killed or wounded. My young friend, Lieutenant Stoch, was on the point of meeting the same fate, our hussars

having already got hold of him, when he recognized me, and called to me, and I made them let him go.

The Emperor richly rewarded the parson of Jena, and the Elector of Saxony, when, as the result of the victories of his new ally Napoleon, he had become king, also rewarded this priest, who lived very peaceably till 1814, at which time he took refuge in France to escape the vengeance of the Prussians. They carried him off and imprisoned him in a fortress for two or three years, then the King of Saxony interceded in his favour with Louis XVIII, and he claimed the priest as having been arrested without authority. The Prussians agreed to release him, and he came to live at Paris.

After the victory of Jena the Emperor gave orders to pursue the enemy in every direction, and our columns made a vast number of prisoners. The King of Prussia only reached Berlin by way of Magdeburg with great difficulty, and it is even asserted that the Queen was on the point of falling into the hands of our advanced guard.

Augereau's corps crossed the Elbe near Dessau. It would take too long to recount the disasters of the Prussian army, it must be sufficient to say that of the troops which had marched against the French not one battalion escaped: they were all captured before the end of the month. The fortresses of Torgau, Erfurt and Wittenberg opened their gates to the conquerors, who marched on Berlin. Napoleon halted at Potsdam and visited the tomb of Frederick the Great; then he went on to Berlin, where, contrary to his practice, Davout's corps marched at the head of the procession, an honour which it well deserved, for it had done the most fighting of all; Augereau's corps followed, and then the Guard.

My first feeling on returning to Berlin, which I had left not long before a brilliant capital, was one of sympathy with a patriotic population thus brought low by defeat, invasion, and the loss of relations and friends. The entry of the "noble Guard," however, disarmed and prisoners, aroused in me very different sentiments. The young officers who had sharpened their sabres on the steps of the French Embassy were now humble enough. They had begged to be taken round, not through, Berlin; not caring to be paraded in view of the inhabitants who had been witnesses of their old swagger. For this very reason the Emperor gave directions to the troops guarding them to march them through the street in which the French Embassy



stood. This little bit of revenge was not disapproved by the Berliners, who had no love for the "noble Guard," and charged them with having driven the King into war.

During our stay at Berlin, I was agreeably surprised by the arrival of my brother Adolphe, whom I supposed to be at the Isle of France. On learning that hostilities had been renewed on the Continent, he asked and obtained leave from General Decaen, commanding the French forces in the East Indies, to return to France, when he hastened to rejoin the Grand Army. Marshal Lefebvre offered to take my brother on his staff; but Adolphe preferred to be an extra aide-de-camp to Augereau—a mistake, as it turned out, for it injured both of us.

Another meeting, not less unexpected, I had at Berlin. As I was one evening walking with my comrades "unter den Linden" I saw a group of sergeants of the 1st Hussars approaching. One of them left the group, ran up, and threw his arms round my neck. It was my old mentor, the elder Pertelay, who said, crying for delight: "Is it you, my boy?" The officers with whom I was were at first not a little astonished to see a sergeant on so familiar terms with a lieutenant, but their surprise was at an end when I told them of my former relations with the brave old fellow. He was never tired of embracing me and saying to his comrades: "Look at him! I made him what he is!" The good man was really convinced that to his lessons I owed my advancement; and when breakfasting with me the next day, he plied me with the most comical advice, highly sensible as he thought, and the very thing to put a finish on my military education. We shall yet come across this typical hussar of the old school in Spain.

Here I may mention a curious fact, showing how chance influences the destinies of men and empires. Bernadotte neglected his duty on the day of Jena by holding aloof while Davout was fighting close by against vastly superior forces. This conduct, for which it is hard to find a name bad enough, aided him to rise to the throne of Sweden. After the battle the Emperor, though furious with him, entrusted to him the task of pursuing the enemy, since his corps, which had not fired a shot, was in better fighting trim than those which had experienced losses. Bernadotte accordingly went on the track of the Prussians, whom he beat first of all at Halle, then, with support from Soult, at Lubeck. Now, as chance would have it, at the moment when the French were attacking Lubeck, the vessels sent by Gustavus IV with a

division of Swedish infantry to the aid of the Prussians were entering the harbour, and the Swedish troops had hardly disembarked when they were compelled to lay down their arms to Bernadotte's force. The marshal, whose manners, when he liked, were, I must admit, very attractive, was especially desirous to earn in the strangers' eyes the character of a well-bred man. He therefore treated the Swedish officers with much friendliness, and after allowing them honourable terms of capitulation, restored them their horses and baggage, provided for their wants, and, inviting the commander-in-chief, Count Moerner, the generals, and field-officers to his quarters, showed them so much kind consideration that on returning to their own country the Swedes extolled Marshal Bernadotte's magnanimity up and down.

When, some years later, the incapable Gustavus IV was driven from his throne by a revolution, and succeeded by his uncle, the Duke of Sudermania, who was old and childless, the assembled states chose as Crown Prince the Duke of Holstein-Augustenburg. He, however, did not long enjoy the dignity, being poisoned, as it was supposed, in 1811. The states assembled again to choose an heir to the throne, and after some hesitation between the various German princes who offered themselves for the place, Count Moerner, remembering Bernadotte's generous conduct at Lubeck, proposed his name. He dwelt on his military talents and on his connection, through his wife, with the Bonapartes; and various officers who had been present at Lubeck having seconded the general's recommendation, Bernadotte was almost unanimously elected Crown Prince, and some years later mounted the throne. We shall see in due course, how, when on the steps of that throne, to which he had been carried by the glory won at the head of French armies, he showed his ingratitude towards his country.

While the 7th corps was at Bromberg, Duroc, Grand Marshal of the Imperial Household, arrived in the middle of the night at Augereau's quarters. The marshal sent for me and bade me get ready to accompany Duroc, who was on his way to Graudenz with a flag of truce to the King of Prussia, and required an officer to take the place of his aide-de-camp, whom he had just sent to Posen with despatches from the Emperor. They selected me because they remembered that in the previous August I had been on a mission to the Prussian Court, so that I knew most of the officials, as well as the ways of it. I was soon ready: the Marshal of the Household took me in his carriage, and going down the left

bank of the Vistula, occupied by our troops, we crossed the river by a ferry opposite Graudenz. We got rooms in the town, and went on immediately to the citadel, where all the Prussian royal family had taken refuge after losing four-fifths of their states. The Vistula lay between the two armies. We found the King calm and resigned. The Queen, whom I had lately seen so beautiful, was much changed, and appeared consumed with grief. She could not conceal from herself that she had urged the King to make war, and was thus the chief cause of the misfortunes of her country, and in no favour with its inhabitants. No more agreeable messenger could have been sent to the King of Prussia than Duroc, who had been ambassador at Berlin, and was well known to both King and Queen, and esteemed for the suavity of his disposition. I was too insignificant to be counted; still the King and Queen recognized me, and addressed some courteous words to me.

In the engagements which had taken place between Jena and the Vistula, the Prussians had captured from us not more than a hundred prisoners. These were employed on the earth-works of the fortress of Graudenz; and Marshal Duroc entrusted me with the distribution of aid to the poor fellows, whose lot was made all the worse by the view which they had of the French troops just across the Vistula. The neighbourhood of his comrades on the other bank, and the contrast of his position with theirs, had moved one of the prisoners, a trooper of the 3rd Dragoons, named Harpin, to employ every means in his power to get out of the hands of the Prussians. It was not an easy job, for he had first to get out of the fortress, then to cross the Vistula. But determination can do a great deal. Being employed by the master carpenter to stack timber, Harpin secretly constructed a little raft; by the aid of a large cable he succeeded in letting down first his raft and then himself to the foot of the ramparts. He launched his raft, and was on the point of embarking, when he was surprised by a patrol, taken back to the fortress, and put in a cell. Next day the Prussian commandant, following the usage of the Prussian army, sentenced Harpin to fifty strokes with a stick. In vain did the dragoon protest that being a Frenchman they had no right to bring him under Prussian regulations; he was a prisoner, and his protest unheeded. He was actually being led to the wooden frame to which he was to be fastened, and two soldiers were making ready to inflict the punishment. At that moment, wanting to get a book out of Duroc's carriage,

which was standing on the drill ground, I caught sight of Harpin struggling in the midst of the Prussian soldiers, who were trying to tie him up. Indignant at the sight of a French soldier about to be flogged, I flew towards him sword in hand, threatening to kill the first man who dared to put the disgrace of a blow on a soldier of the Emperor. The marshal's carriage was guarded by one of Napoleon's couriers, known in every post-house of Europe under the name of Moustache. This man was of herculean strength and approved courage, and had attended the Emperor on twenty battlefields. When he saw me surrounded by the Prussians, he ran to me and brought at my order four loaded pistols which were in the carriage. We set Harpin loose; I gave him a brace of pistols, made him get into the carriage, and placing Moustache by him, declared to the quartermaster-sergeant that, as the carriage was the Emperor's and bore his arms, it was for the French dragoon a sanctuary which I forbade any Prussian to enter, on pain of getting a bullet through his head. At the same time I ordered Moustache and Harpin to fire if anyone attempted to get in. The quartermaster, seeing me resolute, left his prisoner for the moment to consult his superior officers. Then I left Moustache and Harpin, pistols in hand, in the carriage, and went to the King's quarters. There I requested an aide-de-camp to be so kind as to go into his Majesty's room and tell Marshal Duroc that I wished to speak to him on a matter of the utmost urgency. Duroc came out, and I reported what was going on.

On learning that they wanted to flog a French soldier, the marshal, sharing my indignation, returned straightway to the King, and protested warmly, adding that, if the sentence was carried out, he felt sure that the Emperor would take reprisals by flogging not soldiers, but Prussian officers who were prisoners of war. The King, a kindly man, saw that soldiers of other nations should be treated in accordance with their own point of honour, and gave orders that Harpin should be set at liberty. In order to please Napoleon, to whom he was at that moment suing for peace, he proposed to Duroc to exchange his hundred and fifty French prisoners for an equal number of Prussians. Duroc accepted, and an aide-de-camp of the King's went with me to announce the good news to the prisoners, who were overjoyed. We shipped them off at once, and an hour later they were across the Vistula, and with their comrades.

I rejoined the 7th corps at Bromberg, and we soon followed

up the left bank of the Vistula, to approach Warsaw. Marshal Augereau's head-quarters were established at Mallochich. On December 19, the Emperor arrived at Warsaw and prepared to cross the Vistula. Then the 7th corps marched down the left bank again to Utrata, and on the opposite bank we saw, for the first time in this campaign, the Russian outposts.

### CHAPTER XIII

*THE VISTULA* is rapid and broad. We expected that the Emperor would limit his winter operations to establishing his army, covered by the river, in cantonments until the spring. It turned out, however, otherwise. The corps of Davout and Lannes, with the Guard, crossed the Vistula at Warsaw; Augereau and his troops at Utrata, and marched on Plusk, whence we continued to the bank of the Wkra, one of the tributaries of the Bug. Having passed the Vistula the whole French army was in presence of the Russians, and the Emperor ordered an attack for December 24. A thaw and rain rendered evolutions exceedingly difficult on the clayey soil, for in this country there was no metalled road. Omitting the various engagements fought that day in forcing the passage of the Bug, I will only say that Augereau, having the duty of securing that of the Wkra, caused General Desjardins' division to attack Colozomb and General Heudelet's Sochocyn, directing the former attack in person. The Russians, after burning the existing bridge, had erected a redoubt on the left bank, defended by cannon and a strong force of infantry; but they forgot to destroy a store of timber and planks on the right bank by which we were coming up. Of these materials our sappers adroitly made use to construct a provisional bridge in face of a brisk fire from the enemy, which caused the loss of some men of the 14th of the line.

On the following day, December 25, the Emperor, driving the Russians in front of him, marched to Golymin, having with him his Guard, Murat's cavalry, and the corps of Davout and Augereau, the latter leading. Marshal Lannes took the direction of Pultusk. That day there were some trifling engagements, the enemy retiring with all speed; we bivouacked in the woods. On the 26th we continued in pursuit of the Russians. We were at the time of year when the days are shortest, and in that part

of Poland the night at the end of December begins about half-past two. As we approached Golymin sleet was falling, which made it all the darker. We had not seen the enemy since the morning, when, close to Golymin, our scouts, perceiving in the dusk a strong body of troops, whom they could not approach by reason of marshy ground, brought information of them to the marshal. He ordered Colonel Albert to go and reconnoitre this corps with twenty-five mounted chasseurs of his escort, of whom I was put in command. It was a difficult task, for we were in a vast treeless plain, where one might easily go astray. The ground, muddy anyhow, was cut up by swamps, which we could not make out in the darkness; we therefore advanced cautiously, and at length found ourselves twenty-five paces from a line of troops. We supposed at first that it was Davout's corps, but as no one answered our "Who goes there?" we had no doubt that they belonged to the enemy. Still, to be quite certain, Colonel Albert ordered me to send forward the best mounted trooper to the line which we could perceive in the shadow. I selected a corporal named Schmidt, a man of tried courage. The brave man, advancing alone to within ten paces of a regiment which he recognized as Russian by its helmets, fired his carbine into the thick of the squadron and came quickly back.

In order to explain the silence which the enemy had kept, I must tell you that the Russian force which was in front of us had got separated from the main body, and had lost its way in the wide plains which it knew to be occupied by the French troops on their way to Golymin. The Russian generals, hoping under cover of the darkness to be able to pass near us without being recognized, had forbidden all speaking, and in the case of our attacking the wounded were to drop without uttering any sound. This order, which only Russian troops could carry out, was so punctually obeyed that when Colonel Albert, in order to let the marshal know that we were in presence of the enemy, ordered his twenty-five chasseurs to fire a volley, not a cry, not a word was heard, and no one replied to us. Only through the darkness we could perceive some hundred troopers silently advancing to cut off our retreat. Then we had to gallop to rejoin our column, but as many of our men got bogged we had to go less rapidly, although we were close pressed by the Russian horsemen, who fortunately met with the same difficulties as we did. Suddenly a fire broke out in a neighbouring farm, and the plain being thus lighted up the Russians began to gallop, and we had to do the same. We were

in imminent danger, because, having left the French line from General Desjardins' division, we were returning by the front of General Heudelet's. They, not knowing that we had gone, began to fire in the direction of the enemy, so that we had in the rear a Russian squadron pushing us hard, while we were met by a hail of bullets which wounded several of our troopers and horses. It was no good shouting, "We are French; cease firing!" the fire continued all the same. Nor can one blame the officers, who took us for the advanced guard of a Russian column, since their officers, in order to deceive us, often used the French language, and had by this means before now succeeded in surprising our regiments in the night. Colonel Albert and I, with the squad of chasseurs, had a very bad moment of it. At last it struck me that the only way to get recognized was to call out to the officers of Heudelet's division by their names, with which they would know that our enemies could not be acquainted. This plan answered, and we were at length admitted within the French line.

The Russian generals, seeing that they were detected, and wishing to continue their retreat, took a step which I much approved, but which the French have never been able to make up their minds to copy. They pointed all their artillery in the direction of the French troops; then, having taken away their team horses, they opened a very heavy fire to keep us at a distance. Meantime they caused their columns to march on, and when their ammunition was exhausted the gunners retired, leaving the guns to us.

The violent cannonade of the Russians inflicted all the more loss on us that many of the villages in the plain being on fire, the light of them showing to a distance, allowed the enemy's gunners to make out the masses of our troops, especially those of the cuirassiers and dragoons whom Prince Murat had just brought up, and who, in their white cloaks, formed a good mark to the Russian artillerymen. Accordingly these troopers lost more heavily than the other regiments, and one of our dragoon generals, named Finérol, was cut in two by a cannon-ball. Marshal Augereau, after having carried the suburbs, entered Golymin while Davout was attacking it from another side. The Russian columns were at this moment passing through the town, and knowing that Marshal Lannes was marching to cut off their retreat by capturing Pultusk, three leagues farther on, they were trying to reach that point before him at any price. Therefore,

although our soldiers fired upon them at twenty-five paces, they continued their march without replying, because in order to do so they would have had to halt, and every moment was precious. So every division, every regiment, filed past, without saying a word or slackening its pace for a moment. The streets were filled with dying and wounded, but not a groan was to be heard, for they were forbidden. You might have said that we were firing upon shadows. At last our soldiers charged the Russian soldiers with the bayonet, and only when they pierced them could they be convinced that they were dealing with men. We took some thousand prisoners; the rest got off. The marshals debated whether they should pursue, but the weather was so horrible, the night so pitch-dark as soon as one was away from the neighbourhood of the burning houses, the troops so wet and weary, that it was decided to let them rest till daylight.

Golymin was heaped with dead, wounded, and baggage when Marshals Murat and Augereau, accompanied by many generals and their staffs, seeking shelter from the icy rain, established themselves in an immense stable near the town. There, each stretching himself on the dung-heap tried to get warm and to sleep, for we had been on horseback more than twenty hours in this frightful weather—the marshals, the colonels, all the bigwigs in short having, as was right, settled themselves towards the inner end of the stable, so as to be less cold. I, a poor lieutenant, having come in the last, was compelled to lie down close to the doorway, having at the best my body sheltered from the rain but exposed to an icy wind, for there were no doors. It was a disagreeable position when you add that I was dying of hunger, having eaten nothing since the day before. But my lucky star came once more to my help. While the great men, well-sheltered, were sleeping in the warm part of the stable, and the cold was preventing the lieutenants near the door from doing the same, a servant of Prince Murat presented himself at the entry. I remarked in a low voice that his master was asleep. So he gave me a basket for the prince, containing a roast goose, some bread, and some wine, begging me to let his master know that the provision mules would come up in an hour. Having said which he went off to meet them. In possession of these victuals, I took counsel in a low voice with Bro, Maineville, and Stoch, who had just as bad places as I, and were just as shivering and hungry. The result of our deliberation was that as Prince Murat



was asleep, and his canteen was bound to come up before long, he would find something for breakfast when he awoke, while we should be sent off in all directions without any questions as to what we had got to eat ; and that, in consequence, we might without over-burdening our consciences devour the contents of the basket ; and we did so straightway. I do not know whether I may be forgiven for this page's trick : I only know that I have seldom made a pleasanter meal.

The Emperor returned to Warsaw to plan a new campaign. The divisions of Augereau's corps were distributed in the villages around Plusk, if one may give this name to a jumble of wretched hovels inhabited by dirty Jews. The marshal stayed at Christka, a kind of country house built, after the local fashion, of wood. He found a tolerable room there ; the aides-de-camp settled themselves as best they could in the rooms and in the out-buildings. As for myself, by hunting about I found a pretty good room in the gardener's house, furnished with a stove. I established myself there with two of my comrades, and leaving the gardener and his family in possession of their not very inviting beds, we made some for ourselves with planks and straw, with which we did very well.

At Christka we celebrated the New Year's Day of 1807, which was near being the last of my life. The year began, however, very pleasantly for me, for the Emperor, who had not granted any favour to Augereau's staff during the campaign of Austerlitz, repaired his neglect by heaping it with rewards. Colonel Albert was appointed major-general, Major Massy lieutenant-colonel of the 44th, several aides-de-camp were decorated, while Lieutenants Bro, Mainvielle, and I became captains. I was all the more pleased by this promotion that I did not expect it. I had done nothing to earn it, and I was only twenty-four years old. When handing our captains' commissions to Mainvielle, Bro, and myself, Marshal Augereau said : " We will see which of you three will be colonel first." It was I, for six years afterwards I was in command of a regiment while my two comrades were still only captains. But it is true that in that space of time I had been six times wounded.

The Russians, seeing the ground covered with snow and hardened by some sharp frosts, thought that the severe weather would give the men of the North an advantage over the Southerners, little accustomed to endure great cold. Consequently they resolved to attack us, and to this end they caused the greater

part of their troops, who were posted in face of ours before Warsaw, to pass in rear of the vast forests which separated them from us, and marched them towards the Lower Vistula upon the cantonments of Bernadotte and Ney, hoping to surprise and crush them before the Emperor with the other corps could come to their support. But Bernadotte and Ney offered a valiant resistance, and Napoleon, warned in time, marched with a considerable force on the enemy's rear, who, threatened with being cut off from his base, retreated towards Königsberg. We had then, on February 1, to leave our comfortable cantonments, and again begin fighting and sleeping on the snow.

At the head of the centre column, commanded by the Emperor in person, marched Prince Murat's cavalry, then Soult's corps, supported by Augereau's; the Imperial Guard brought up the rear. Davout's corps marched on the right flank of the column, Ney's on the left. Such a body of troops making for the same point would soon exhaust the supplies which the country could furnish, and we suffered much from hunger; the Guard alone, having wagons, carried with it the means of providing rations. The other corps lived how they could—that is to say, they got scarcely anything.

There is little need for me to give many details of the affairs preceding the battle of Eylau, the more so that Augereau's troops, who formed the second line, took no part in them. The most important were those at Mohrungen, Bergfried, Guttstadt and Waltersdorf.

In conformity with the plan of these Memoirs, I shall not give a detailed account of the battle of Eylau, but confine myself to relating the chief incidents. On the morning of February 8 the position of the armies was as follows. The Russian left was at Serpallen, their centre in front of Auklapen, their right at Schmoditten. They awaited 8,000 Prussians who were to debouch by Althoff, and form the extreme right. The front of the enemy's line was covered by 500 guns, a third at least of large calibre. The French were far less favourably situated, since the wings had not come up, and the Emperor had therefore to go into action with only a portion of the troops on which he had reckoned. Soult's corps was placed at right and left of Eylau, the Guard in the town, and Augereau's corps between Rothenen and Eylau, fronting towards Serpallen. The enemy thus formed a semicircle, outflanking us, and the two forces occupied ground in which were numerous ponds, which, however,

were covered by the snow. Neither side, therefore, noticed them, nor fired ricochet shots to break the ice. If they had, there would have been a second Satschan disaster.

Marshal Davout, who was expected on our right, towards Molwitten, and Marshal Ney, who was to form our left, on the side of Althoff, had not appeared when, soon after sunrise, about eight o'clock, the Russians began the attack by a violent cannonade. Our artillery, though inferior in numbers, replied; and all the more successfully that our gunners, who were by far the better trained, had masses of unsheltered men to aim at, while most of the Russian shot struck the walls of Rothenen and Eylau. Soon the enemy sent forward a strong column to carry the latter place; but it was smartly repulsed by the Guard and Soult's division. At the same moment the Emperor heard with joy that from the top of the church tower Davout's corps could be seen advancing. He came by Molwitten, and marching on Serpallen, drove in the Russian left, pushing them back to Klein Sausgarten.

Marshal Bennisgen, seeing his left beaten and his rear threatened by the bold Davout, resolved to crush him by superior force. Then Napoleon, in order to hinder this movement by a diversion against the enemy's centre, ordered Augereau to attack, though foreseeing that the operation would be difficult. But circumstances arise in battle in which some troops must be sacrificed to secure the safety and victory of the greater part. General Corbineau, the Emperor's aide-de-camp, was killed at our side by a cannon-ball, when bringing Augereau the order to advance. The marshal, passing with his two divisions between Eylau and Rothenen, proceeded boldly against the enemy's centre; and the 14th, our leading regiment, had already captured the position which the Emperor had given orders to carry and hold at all costs, when the heavy guns which were in a semicircle round Augereau belched forth such a hail of grape and canister as had never been seen within human memory. In one instant our two divisions were rent to pieces by the storm of iron. General Desjardins was killed, General Heudelet dangerously wounded. Still they held their ground, until the army corps being almost entirely destroyed, its fragments had perforce to be recalled to the neighbourhood of the cemetery of Eylau; always excepting the 14th, who, wholly surrounded by the enemy, remained on the little hill which it had occupied. Our position was all the more grievous since a violent wind dashed the thickly-falling snow into

our faces. It was impossible to see more than fifteen paces off, so that several French batteries fired upon us as well as those of the enemy. Marshal Augereau was wounded by a grape shot.

Still the devotion of the 7th corps had produced a good effect, for not only had Davout, relieved by our attack, been able to hold his positions, but, further, he had captured Klein Sausgarten, and even pushed his advance-guard as far as Kuschitten, in rear of the enemy. At this moment the Emperor, wishing to strike the final blow, ordered Murat with ninety squadrons to advance between Eylau and Rothenen. The terrible weight of this mass broke the Russian centre, upon which it charged with the sabre, and threw it into complete disorder. The brave General d'Hautpoul was killed at the head of his cuirassiers, so also was General Dahlmann, who had succeeded General Morland in the command of the chasseurs of the guard.

The success of our cavalry made victory certain. In vain did 8,000 Prussians, who had escaped Ney's pursuit, advancing by way of Althoff, attempt a new attack. They bore (it is hard to say why) on Kuschitten, instead of marching on Eylau. Davout beat them back, and the arrival of Ney's corps, which appeared towards evening at Schmoditten, making Bennigsen fear that his communications might be cut, he gave orders for a retreat on Königsberg, leaving the French masters of that frightful battlefield covered with dying men and corpses. Never since the invention of gunpowder had its effects been so terrible. Of all battles, ancient or modern, Eylau was that in which the proportion of loss to combatants was greatest.\* The Russians had 25,000 men disabled, and although the number of French who were touched by steel or lead was reported at 10,000 only, I estimate them as at least 20,000. The total for the two armies was thus 45,000 men, of whom more than half died. Augereau's corps was almost entirely destroyed, since of 15,000 combatants present under arms when the action began, there remained in the evening only 3,000, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Massy, the marshal, all the generals and all the colonels being either killed or wounded.

It is difficult to understand why Bennigsen, knowing that Davout and Ney had not yet come up, did not profit by their

\* [Marbot is not quite correct here. The loss (about one in three of those engaged) was quite as great at the Borodino, and at Salamanca; nearly as great at Marengo; greater at Zornsdorf. In ancient battles of course a similar proportion was not uncommon.]

absence to attack the town of Eylau at daybreak with his powerful centre, instead of wasting precious time in a cannonade. For his superior force would certainly have made him master of the town before Davout could come up, and then the Emperor would have been sorry that he advanced so far, instead of entrenching himself on the plateau of Ziegelhof, and there awaiting his wings as he had originally intended. The day after the battle he gave orders for a pursuit as far as the gates of Königsberg, but as the town was fortified it was not thought prudent to attack it with weakened forces, the more so that almost all the Russian army was in and about the place.

Napoleon passed several days at Eylau to restore the wounded and reorganize the armies. Augereau's corps having been almost destroyed, what was left of it was distributed among the other corps, and the marshal obtained leave to return to France to get cured of his wound. The Emperor, seeing that the main Russian army was at a distance,\* cantoned his troops in the towns and villages on the east side of the Lower Vistula.

The only thing that happened during the rest of the winter was the capture of Dantzic by the French.† Hostilities in the open did not recommence till the month of June.

## CHAPTER XIV

*I DID* not wish to interrupt my account of the battle of Eylau to tell what befell me in that terrible conflict. So I must go back to the autumn of 1805, when the officers of the Grand Army, among their preparations for the battle of Austerlitz, were completing their outfits. I had two good horses, the third, for whom I was looking, my charger, was to be better still. It was a difficult thing to find, for though horses were far less dear than now, their price was pretty high, and I had not much

\*[The retreat of the enemy hardly appears an adequate reason for his own retreat to a point some hundred miles in rear of the field of battle. As a matter of fact, Napoleon was worse beaten at Eylau than it suited him to admit; and but for the abominable state of the enemy's commissariat (that everlasting curse of Russian armies) and the slackness of the English Government, the retreat from Moscow might have been anticipated.]

†[In the following May. "Winter," of course, is used technically.]

money; but chance served me admirably. I met a learned German, Herr von Aister, whom I had known when he was a professor at Sorèze. He had become tutor to the children of a rich Swiss banker, M. Scherer, established at Paris in partnership with M. Finguerlin. He informed me that M. Finguerlin, a wealthy man, living in fine style, had a large stud, in the first rank of which figured a lovely mare, called Lisette, easy in her paces, as light as a deer, and so well broken that a child could lead her. But this mare, when she was ridden, had a terrible fault, and fortunately a rare one; she bit like a bulldog, and furiously attacked people whom she disliked, which decided M. Finguerlin to sell her. She was bought for Mme. de Lauriston, whose husband, one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, had written to her to get his campaigning outfit ready. When selling the mare, M. Finguerlin had forgotten to mention her fault, and that very evening a groom was found disembowelled at her feet. Mme. de Lauriston, reasonably alarmed, brought an action to cancel the bargain; not only did she get her verdict, but, in order to prevent further disasters, the police ordered that a written statement should be placed in Lisette's stall to inform purchasers of her ferocity, and that any bargain with regard to her should be void unless the purchaser declared in writing that his attention had been called to the notice. You may suppose that with such a character as this the mare was not easy to dispose of, and thus Herr von Aister informed me that her owner had decided to let her go for what anyone would give. I offered 1,000 francs, and M. Finguerlin delivered Lisette to me, though she had cost him 5,000. This animal gave me a good deal of trouble for some months. It took four or five men to saddle her, and you could only bridle her by covering her eyes and fastening all four legs; but once you were on her back, you found her a really incomparable mount.

However, since while in my possession she had already bitten several people, and had not spared me, I was thinking of parting with her. But I had meanwhile engaged in my service François Woirland, a man who was afraid of nothing, and he, before going near Lisette, whose bad character had been mentioned to him, armed himself with a good hot roast leg of mutton. When the animal flew at him to bite him, he held out the mutton; she seized it in her teeth, and burning her gums, palate, and tongue, gave a scream, let the mutton drop, and from that moment was perfectly submissive to Woirland, and did not venture to attack

him again. I employed the same method with a like result. Lisette became as docile as a dog, and allowed me and my servant to approach her freely. She even became a little more tractable towards the stablemen of the staff, whom she saw every day, but woe to the strangers who passed near her !

Such was the mare which I was riding at Eylau at the moment when the fragments of Augereau's army corps, shattered by a hail of musketry and cannon-balls, were trying to rally near the great cemetery. The 14th of the line had remained alone on a hillock, which it could not quit except by the Emperor's order. The snow had ceased for the moment ; we could see how the intrepid regiment, surrounded by the enemy, was waving its eagle in the air to show that it still held its ground and asked for support. The Emperor, touched by the grand devotion of these brave men, resolved to try to save them, and ordered Augereau to send an officer to them with orders to leave the hillock, form a small square, and make their way towards us, while a brigade of cavalry should march in their direction and assist their efforts. This was before Murat's great charge. It was almost impossible to carry out the Emperor's wishes, because a swarm of Cossacks was between us and the 14th, and it was clear that any officer who was sent towards the unfortunate regiment would be killed or captured before he could get to it. But the order was positive and the marshal had to comply.

It was customary in the Imperial army for the aides-de-camp to place themselves in file a few paces from their general, and for the one who was in front to go on duty first ; then, when he had performed his mission, to return and place himself last, in order that each might carry orders in his turn, and dangers might be shared equally. A brave captain of engineers, named Froissard, who, though not an aide-de-camp, was on the marshal's staff, happened to be nearest to him, and was bidden to carry the order to the 14th. M. Froissard galloped off ; we lost sight of him in the midst of the Cossacks, and never saw him again nor heard what became of him. The marshal, seeing that the 14th did not move, sent an officer named David ; he had the same fate as Froissard ; we never heard of him again. Probably both were killed and stripped, and could not be recognized among the many corpses which covered the ground. For the third time the marshal called, " The officer for duty." It was my turn.

Seeing the son of his old friend, and I venture to say his favourite aide-de-camp, come up, the kind marshal's face changed,

and his eyes filled with tears, for he could not hide from himself that he was sending me to almost certain death. But the Emperor must be obeyed. I was a soldier, it was impossible to make one of my comrades go in my place, nor would I have allowed it; it would have been disgracing me. So I dashed off. But though ready to sacrifice my life I felt bound to take all necessary precautions to save it. I had observed that the two officers who went before me had gone with swords drawn, which led me to think that they had purposed to defend themselves against any Cossacks who might attack them on the way. Such defence, I thought, was ill-considered, since it must have compelled them to halt in order to fight a multitude of enemies, who would overwhelm them in the end. So I went otherwise to work, and leaving my sword in the scabbard, I regarded myself as a horseman who is trying to win a steeplechase, and goes as quickly as possible and by the shortest line towards the appointed goal, without troubling himself with what is to right or left of his path. Now, as my goal was the hillock occupied by the 14th, I resolved to get there without taking any notice of the Cossacks, whom in thought I abolished. This plan answered perfectly. Lisette, lighter than a swallow and flying rather than running, devoured the intervening space, leaping the piles of dead men and horses, the ditches, the broken gun-carriages, the half-extinguished bivouac fires. Thousands of Cossacks swarmed over the plain. The first who saw me acted like sportsmen who, when beating, start a hare, and announce its presence to each other by shouts of "Your side! Your side!" but none of the Cossacks tried to stop me, first, on account of the extreme rapidity of my pace, and also probably because, their numbers being so great, each thought that I could not avoid his comrades farther on, so that I escaped them all, and reached the 14th regiment without either myself or my excellent mare having received the slightest scratch.

I found the 14th formed in square on the top of the hillock, but as the slope was very slight the enemy's cavalry had been able to deliver several charges. These had been vigorously repulsed, and the French regiment was surrounded by a circle of dead horses and dragoons, which formed a kind of rampart, making the position by this time almost inaccessible to cavalry; as I found, for in spite of the aid of our men, I had much difficulty in passing over this horrible entrenchment. At last I was in the square. Since Colonel Savary's death at the passage of



the Wkra, the 14th had been commanded by a major. While I imparted to this officer, under a hail of balls, the order to quit his position and try to rejoin his corps, he pointed out to me that the enemy's artillery had been firing on the 14th for an hour, and had caused it such loss that the handful of soldiers which remained would inevitably be exterminated if they went down into the plain, and that, moreover, there would not be time to prepare to execute such a movement, since a Russian column was marching on him, and was not more than a hundred paces away. "I see no means of saving the regiment," said the major; "return to the Emperor, bid him farewell from the 14th of the line, which has faithfully executed his orders, and bear to him the eagle which he gave us, and which we can defend no longer—it would add too much to the pain of death to see it fall into the hands of the enemy." Then the major handed me his eagle. Saluted for the last time by the glorious fragment of the intrepid regiment with cries of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" they were going to die for him. It was the *Cæsar morituri te salutant*, but in this case the cry was uttered by heroes. The infantry eagles were very heavy, and their weight was increased by a stout oak pole on the top of which they were fixed. The length of the pole embarrassed me much, and as the stick without the eagle could not constitute a trophy for the enemy, I resolved with the major's consent to break it and only carry off the eagle. But at the moment when I was leaning forward from my saddle in order to get a better purchase to separate the eagle from the pole, one of the numerous cannon-balls which the Russians were sending at us went through the hinder peak of my hat, less than an inch from my head. The shock was all the more terrible since my hat, being fastened on by a strong leather strap under the chin, offered more resistance to the blow. I seemed to be blotted out of existence, but I did not fall from my horse; blood flowed from my nose, my ears, and even my eyes; nevertheless I still could hear and see, and I preserved all my intellectual faculties, although my limbs were paralysed to such an extent that I could not move a single finger.

Meanwhile the column of Russian infantry which we had just perceived was mounting the hill; they were grenadiers wearing mitre-shaped caps with metal ornaments. Soaked with spirits and in vastly superior numbers, these men hurled themselves furiously on the feeble remains of the unfortunate 14th, whose soldiers had for several days been living only on potatoes and

melted snow; that day they had not had time to prepare even this wretched meal. Still our brave Frenchmen made a valiant defence with their bayonets, and when the square had been broken, they held together in groups and sustained the unequal fight for a long time.

During this terrible struggle several of our men, in order not to be struck from behind, set their backs against my mare's flanks, she, contrary to her practice, remaining perfectly quiet. If I had been able to move I should have urged her forward to get away from this field of slaughter. But it was absolutely impossible for me to press my legs so as to make the animal I rode understand my wish. My position was the more frightful since, as I have said, I retained the power of sight and thought. Not only were they fighting all round me, which exposed me to bayonet-thrusts, but a Russian officer with a hideous countenance kept making efforts to run me through. As the crowd of combatants prevented him from reaching me, he pointed me out to the soldiers around him, and they, taking me for the commander of the French, as I was the only mounted man, kept firing at me over their comrades' heads, so that bullets were constantly whistling past my ear. One of them would certainly have taken away the small amount of life that was still in me had not a terrible incident led to my escape from the *mêlée*.

Among the Frenchmen who had got their flanks against my mare's near flank was a quartermaster-sergeant, whom I knew from having frequently seen him at the marshal's, making copies for him of the "morning states" This man, having been attacked and wounded by several of the enemy, fell under Lisette's belly, and was seizing my leg to pull himself up, when a Russian grenadier, too drunk to stand steady, wishing to finish him by a thrust in the breast, lost his balance, and the point of his bayonet went astray into my cloak, which at that moment was puffed out by the wind. Seeing that I did not fall, the Russian left the sergeant and aimed a great number of blows at me. These were at first fruitless, but one at last reached me, piercing my left arm, and I felt with a kind of horrible pleasure my blood flowing hot. The Russian grenadier with redoubled fury made another thrust at me, but, stumbling with the force which he put into it, drove his bayonet into my mare's thigh. Her ferocious instincts being restored by the pain, she sprang at the Russian, and at one mouthful tore off his nose, lips, eyebrows, and all the skin of his face, making of him a living death's-head,

dripping with blood. Then hurling herself with fury among the combatants, kicking and biting, Lisette upset everything that she met on her road. The officer who had made so many attempts to strike me tried to hold her by the bridle ; she seized him by his belly, and carrying him off with ease, she bore him out of the crush to the foot of the hillock, where, having torn out his entrails and mashed his body under her feet, she left him dying on the snow. Then, taking the road by which she had come, she made her way at full gallop towards the cemetery of Eylau. Thanks to the hussar's saddle on which I was sitting I kept my seat. But a new danger awaited me. The snow had begun to fall again, and great flakes obscured the daylight when, having arrived close to Eylau, I found myself in front of a battalion of the Old Guard, who, unable to see clearly at a distance, took me for an enemy's officer leading a charge of cavalry. The whole battalion at once opened fire on me ; my cloak and my saddle were riddled, but I was not wounded nor was my mare. She continued her rapid course, and went through the three ranks of the battalion as easily as a snake through a hedge. But this last spurt had exhausted Lisette's strength ; she had lost much blood, for one of the large veins in her thigh had been divided, and the poor animal collapsed suddenly and fell on one side, rolling me over on the other.

Stretched on the snow among the piles of dead and dying, unable to move in any way, I gradually and without pain lost consciousness. I felt as if I was being gently rocked to sleep. At last I fainted quite away without being revived by the mighty clatter which Murat's ninety squadrons advancing to the charge must have made in passing close to me and perhaps over me. I judge that my swoon lasted four hours, and when I came to my senses I found myself in this horrible position. I was completely naked, having nothing on but my hat and my right boot. A man of the transport corps, thinking me dead, had stripped me in the usual fashion, and wishing to pull off the only boot that remained, was dragging me by one leg with his foot against my body. The jerks which the man gave me no doubt had restored me to my senses. I succeeded in sitting up and spitting out the clots of blood from my throat. The shock caused by the wind of the ball had produced such an extravasation of blood, that my face, shoulders, and chest were black, while the rest of my body was stained red by the blood from my wound. My hat and my hair were full of bloodstained snow, and as I rolled my haggard eyes I must have been horrible to see. Anyhow, the transport

man looked the other way, and went off with my property without my being able to say a single word to him, so utterly prostrate was I. But I had recovered my mental faculties, and my thoughts turned towards God and my mother.

The setting sun cast some feeble rays through the clouds. I took what I believed to be a last farewell of it "If," thought I, "I had only not been stripped, some one of the numerous people who pass near me would notice the gold lace on my pelisse, and, recognizing that I am a marshal's aide-de-camp, would perhaps have carried me to the ambulance. But seeing me naked, they do not distinguish me from the corpses with which I am surrounded, and, indeed, there soon will be no difference between them and me. I cannot call help, and the approaching night will take away all hope of succour. The cold is increasing: shall I be able to bear it till to-morrow, seeing that I feel my naked limbs stiffening already?" So I made up my mind to die, for if I had been saved by a miracle in the midst of the terrible *mêlée* between the Russians and the 14th, could I expect that there would be a second miracle to extricate me from my present horrible position? The second miracle did take place in the following manner. Marshal Augereau had a valet named Pierre Dannel, a very intelligent and very faithful fellow, but somewhat given to arguing. Now it happened during our stay at La Houssaye that Dannel, having answered his master, got dismissed. In despair, he begged me to plead for him. This I did so zealously that I succeeded in getting him taken back into favour. From that time the valet had been devotedly attached to me. The outfit having been all left behind at Landsberg, he had started all out of his own head on the day of battle to bring provisions to his master. He had placed these in a very light wagon which could go everywhere, and contained the articles which the marshal most frequently required. This little wagon was driven by a soldier belonging to the same company of the transport corps as the man who had just stripped me. This latter, with my property in his hands, passed near the wagon, which was standing at the side of the cemetery, and, recognizing the driver, his old comrade, he hailed him, and showed him the splendid booty which he had just taken from a dead man.

Now you must know that when we were in cantonments on the Vistula the marshal happened to send Dannel to Warsaw for provisions, and I commissioned him to get the trimming of black astrachan taken from my pelisse, and have it replaced by

grev, this having recently been adopted by Prince Berthier's aides-de-camp, who set the fashion in the army Up to now, I was the only one of Augereau's officers who had grey astrachan. Dannel, who was present when the transport man made his display, quickly recognized my pelisse, which made him look more closely at the other effects of the alleged dead man Among these he found my watch, which had belonged to my father and was marked with his cypher. The valet had no longer any doubt that I had been killed, and while deploring my loss, he wished to see me for the last time Guided by the transport man he reached me and found me living. Great was the joy of this worthy man, to whom I certainly owed my life. He made haste to fetch my servant and some orderlies, and had me carried to a barn, where he rubbed my body with rum. Meanwhile some one went to fetch Dr. Raymond, who came at length, dressed the wound in my arm, and declared that the release of blood due to it would be the saving of me.

My brother and my comrades were quickly round me ; something was given to the transport soldier who had taken my clothes, which he returned very willingly, but as they were saturated with water and with blood, Marshal Augereau had me wrapped in things belonging to himself The Emperor had given the marshal leave to go to Landsberg, but as his wound forbade him to ride, his aides-de-camp had procured a sledge, on which the body of a carriage had been placed. The marshal, who could not make up his mind to leave me, had me fastened up beside him, for I was too weak to sit upright

Before I was removed from the field of battle I had seen my poor Lisette near me. The cold had caused the blood from her wound to clot, and prevented the loss from being too great. The creature had got on to her legs and was eating the straw which the soldiers had used the night before for their bivouacs. My servant, who was very fond of Lisette, had noticed her when he was helping to remove me, and cutting up into bandages the shirt and hood of a dead soldier, he wrapped her leg with them and thus made her able to walk to Landsberg. The officer in command of the small garrison there had had the forethought to get quarters ready for the wounded, so the staff found places in a large and good inn.

We stayed thirty-six hours at Landsberg. This rest, and the good care taken of me, restored me to the use of speech and senses, and when on the second day after the battle Marshal

Augereau started for Warsaw I was able to be carried in the sledge. The journey lasted eight days. Gradually I recovered, but as strength returned I began to feel a sensation of icy cold in my right foot. At Warsaw I was lodged in the house that had been taken for the marshal, which suited me the better that I was not able to leave my bed. Yet the wound in my arm was doing well, the extravasated blood was becoming absorbed, my skin was recovering its natural colour. The doctor knew not to what he could ascribe my inability to rise, till hearing me complaining of my leg, he examined it, and found that my foot was gangrened. An accident of my early days was the cause of this new trouble. At Sorèze I had my right foot wounded by the unbuttoned foil of a schoolfellow with whom I was fencing. It seemed that the muscles of the part had become sensitive, and had suffered much from cold while I was lying unconscious on the field of Eylau; thence had resulted a swelling which explained the difficulty experienced by the soldier in dragging off my right boot. The foot was frost-bitten, and as it had not been treated in time, gangrene had appeared in the site of the old wound from the foil. The doctor turned pale when he saw the foot: then, making four servants hold me, and taking his knife, he dug the mortified flesh from my foot just as one cuts the damaged part out of an apple. The pain was great, but I did not complain. It was otherwise, however, when the knife reached the living flesh, and laid bare the muscles and bones till one could see them moving. Then the doctor, standing on a chair, soaked a sponge in hot sweetened wine, and let it fall drop by drop into the hole which he had just dug in my foot. The pain became unbearable. Still, for eight days I had to undergo this torture morning and evening, but my leg was saved.

Nowadays, when promotions and decorations are bestowed so lavishly, some reward would certainly be given to an officer who had braved danger as I had done in reaching the 14th regiment; but under the Empire a devoted act of that kind was thought so natural that I did not receive the cross, nor did it ever occur to me to ask for it. A long rest having been ordered for the cure of Marshal Augereau's wound, the Emperor wrote to bid him return for treatment to France, and sent to Italy for Masséna, to whom my brother, Bro, and several of my comrades were attached. Augereau took me with him, as well as Dr. Raymond and his secretary. I had to be lifted in and out of the carriage; otherwise I found my health coming back as I

got away from those icy regions towards a milder climate. My mare passed the winter in the stables of M. de Launay, head of the forage department. Our road lay through Silesia. So long as we were in that horrible Poland, it required twelve, sometimes sixteen, horses to draw the carriage at a walk through the bogs and quagmires; but in Germany we found at length civilization and real roads.

After a halt at Dresden, and ten or twelve days' stay at Frankfurt, we reached Paris about March 15. I walked very lame, wore my arm in a sling, and still felt the terrible shaking caused by the wind of the cannon-ball; but the joy of seeing my mother again, and her kind care of me, together with the sweet influences of the spring, completed my cure. Before leaving Warsaw I had meant to throw away the hat which the ball had pierced, but the marshal kept it as a curiosity, and gave it to my mother. It still exists in my possession, and should be kept as a family relic.

## CHAPTER XV

*AT PARIS* I remained the rest of March, all April, and the first week of May. It was during this stay that I made the acquaintance of the Desbrières family, with whom I was shortly to become connected. As soon as my health was restored, I felt that I could not stay longer at Paris. Marshal Augereau recommended me to Marshal Lannes, who received me very cordially on his staff. In order to be in a position to watch the enemy's movements during the winter, the Emperor had taken up his quarters in the midst of the cantonments of the troops, first at Osterode, then at the château of Finkenstein, whence, while making ready for a new campaign, he governed France and gave instructions to his ministers, receiving their reports every week. The portfolios containing the various papers from each minister were sent every Wednesday evening to M. Denniée, under-secretary of state for war, who sent them off every Thursday morning. The duty of conveying them to the Emperor was entrusted to a clerk, but the service was badly performed, since the majority of the clerks had never been out of France, could not speak a word of German, and knew neither the money nor the posting regulations of foreign countries, so that the moment they had crossed the Rhine they were quite helpless. Besides, these

gentlemen, not being accustomed to fatigue, very soon broke down under a journey of more than 300 leagues, requiring continuous travelling ten days and nights. One of them was even careless enough to let his despatches be stolen.

Furious at this mischance, Napoleon sent a mounted messenger to Paris ordering M. Denniée to entrust the portfolios in future only to officers who knew German, and who were enough accustomed to roughing it to be able to fulfil the mission more efficiently. M. Denniée was at a loss to find one when I presented myself with Marshal Lannes' letter summoning me to join him. Delighted at seeing a way of quickly getting off his portfolios with safety, he bade me get ready by the following Thursday, and gave me 5,000 francs for posting expenses and the purchase of a carriage. This suited me very well, as I had very little money with which to rejoin the army at the other end of Poland.

We left Paris about May 10; my servant and I were well armed, and whenever one of us was compelled to leave the carriage for a moment the other kept guard. We knew enough German to hurry along the postilions, who were far more amenable to an officer in uniform than to the clerks. Thus, instead of requiring, like those gentlemen, nine days and a half, or, perhaps, ten days to get from Paris to Finkenstein, I did the journey in eight days and a half.

The Emperor, delighted at getting his despatches twenty-four hours quicker, began by praising my zeal which had induced me to return to the army in spite of my recent wounds, and added that, as I was such a good postman, I was to start back that same night for Paris and bring back some more portfolios. This would not hinder me from being present when hostilities recommenced, which could not be until the beginning of June.

Although I had not by a long way spent the 5,000 francs which M. Denniée had handed me, the marshal of the Palace gave me the same amount for my return journey. I went back to Paris at full speed, remained twenty-four hours there, and started back for Poland. The minister of war handed me another 5,000 francs for the third journey; it was a good deal more than was necessary, but such were the Emperor's orders. It is true that the journeys were very tiring, and still more tedious, although the weather was very fine. I was on wheels day and night for nearly a month, with my servant as my sole companion. I found the Emperor again at the château of Finkenstein. I was afraid that just when fighting was going to begin I should have



to go on acting postman ; but luckily officers had been found to carry the despatches, and the service was already organized. The Emperor gave me leave to rejoin Marshal Lannes, which I did at Marienburg on May 25. Colonel Sicard, Augereau's aide-de-camp, was with him, and had been kind enough to bring my horses. It was a great pleasure to see again my dear mare Lisette, who was still capable of doing good service.

The fortress of Dantzic, which the French had besieged during the winter, had fallen into their hands. The return of the summer soon caused the campaign to be reopened. The Russians beat up our cantonments on June 5, and were smartly repulsed at all points. At Heilsberg on the 10th there was an engagement sanguinary enough to have been dignified by some historians into a battle, the enemy being again beaten. I shall not give any details of this affair, because Marshal Lannes' corps only came up at nightfall and took very little part in it. We received, however, a pretty good number of shot, one of which inflicted a mortal wound on Colonel Sicard, who had been struck by a bullet at Eylau, and was hardly cured when he came back to fight afresh. Before dying he bade me take farewell of Augereau for him, and gave me a letter for his wife. It was a sad scene and distressed me much.

After their defeat at Heilsberg on the 10th of June, the Russians made a headlong retreat and gained a day's march on the French, who, on the evening of the 13th, were assembled in advance of Eylau on the left bank of the Alle. The enemy occupied Bartenstein on the right bank, and the two forces descended the river, marching parallel with each other. Bennigsen, having his base of supplies at Königsberg, where the Prussian army was, planned to reach that town before the French army could come up ; but to do this, he had to cross to the left bank of the Alle, along which Napoleon was marching from Eylau. The Russian general hoped to reach Friedland sufficiently in advance to be able to cross the river unopposed. But the same motives which made Bennigsen wish to keep Königsberg made it to the Emperor's interest to capture it, and for some days he had been manœuvring to outflank the enemy's left, in order to draw them away from the place ; while he had detached Soult, Murat, and Davout towards it, in order to meet the Russians if they got there first. But he was not satisfied with this precaution. Foreseeing that in order to reach Königsberg the Russians would seek to cross the Alle at Friedland, he determined to occupy that

town before them. In the night between June 13 and 14 he sent forward the corps of Marshals Lannes and Mortier, with three divisions of cavalry. The rest of the army was to follow. Lannes, who, with Oudinot's grenadiers and a brigade of cavalry, formed the advance, reached Posthenen, one league short of Friedland, at 2 A.M., and sent the 9th Hussars to reconnoitre the latter town. They were driven back with loss, and the rising sun enabled us to see a large part of the Russian army massed on the other side of the river, on the high table-land between Allenau and Friedland. The enemy was beginning to cross the old bridge of the town, close to which he had constructed two new ones.

The Emperor was still at Eylau. The various army corps were marching on Friedland, from which they were several leagues distant, when Lannes, who had marched all night, arrived before the town. If the marshal had only listened to his own eagerness he would have attacked the enemy on the spot, but they had already 30,000 men in position on the plain in front of Friedland, and their lines, the right of which was in front of Heinrichsdorf, the centre on the Millstream, and the left on the village of Sortlack, were being continually strengthened, while Lannes had only 10,000 men. These, however, he placed very skilfully in the village of Posthenen, and in the wood of Sortlack, whence he threatened the Russian left, while, with two divisions of cavalry, he tried to stop their march on Heinrichsdorf, a village on the road from Friedland to Königsberg. A brisk fire was opened, but Marshal Mortier's corps appeared without delay, and in order to dispute the way to Königsberg with the Russians, while he waited for reinforcements, he occupied Heinrichsdorf and the space between that village and Posthenen. Still, it was not possible that Mortier and Lannes could, with 25,000 men, make head against the 70,000 Russians who would shortly face them. The moment was becoming very critical. Marshal Lannes was sending officers every instant to warn the Emperor to hurry up the army corps which he knew were on the march behind him. I was the first sent, and, mounted on my swift Lisette, I met the Emperor leaving Eylau and found him beaming. He made me come to his side, and as we galloped I had to give him an account of all that had taken place before I had left the field of battle. When I had ended my report the Emperor said smiling, "Have you a good memory?" "Pretty fair, sir." "Well, what anniversary is it to-day, 14th June?"

"Marengo." "Yes," replied the Emperor, "that of Marengo; and I am going to beat the Russians as I beat the Austrians." So convinced was Napoleon on this point that as he rode along the columns, and while the soldiers saluted him with frequent cheers, he repeatedly said to them, "To-day is a lucky day, the anniversary of Marengo."

It was past eleven when the Emperor arrived on the field of battle, where several army corps had already joined Lannes and Mortier. The rest, with the guard, came up in due course. Napoleon rectified the lines. Ney commanded the right wing, which was placed in the woods of Sortlack, Lannes and Mortier the centre, between Posthenen and Heinrichsdorf, the left extended beyond the last-named village. It was oppressively hot; the Emperor allowed the troops an hour's rest, and settled that at a signal given by twenty-five guns firing simultaneously, a general attack should be made. Marshal Ney's corps had the roughest task. Concealed in the wood of Sortlack, it had to issue from it and make its way into Friedland, where the enemy's main force and reserves were massed, capture the bridges, and thus cut off the Russians' retreat entirely. It is difficult to understand how Bennigsen could have made up his mind to place his army in advance of the Friedland defile, where it had in rear the Alle, with its steep banks, and before it the French, who held the plain. To account for his action, the Russian general explained later on that, being a day's march ahead of Napoleon, and not being able to conceive that the French could cover in twelve hours a distance equal to that which his troops had taken twenty-four hours to traverse, he had supposed, when he found Lannes' corps at Friedland, that it was an isolated advanced guard of the French army, which he would have no difficulty in crushing, and that, when he discovered his error, it was too late to bring his army back to the other side of the Alle, because the Friedland defile would have caused him a certain loss, so that he preferred to fight with vigour.

About 1 p.m. the twenty-five cannons at Posthenen fired simultaneously by the Emperor's order, and battle was joined all along the line. Our left and our centre advanced at first very slowly, in order to give the right, under Ney, time to carry the town. The marshal, issuing from the wood at Sortlack, captured the village of that name and advanced very quickly on Friedland, clearing everything on his road. But in the passing from the wood and village of Sortlack to the first houses of Friedland,

the troops had to march without cover, and found themselves exposed to a terrible fire from the Russian batteries, which, being placed in rear of the town on the high ground of the opposite bank, caused them immense loss. What made the fire more dangerous was that the enemy's gunners, having the river between us and them, could aim in security, since they saw that it was impossible for our infantry to attack them. This serious disadvantage might have prevented the capture of Friedland, but Napoleon remedied it by sending fifty guns, which were placed by General S  narmont, and fired across the river at the Russian batteries, pouring upon them such a hail of shot as must soon have dismounted them. As soon as the fire of the enemy's guns was silenced, Ney continued his bold march, rolled back the Russians on Friedland, and entered pell-mell with them into the streets of the unlucky town, which the shells had already set on fire. There was a terrible bayonet fight, and the Russians, crowded one upon another and hardly able to move, lost very heavily. Ultimately they were obliged, in spite of their courage, to retire in disorder, and seek a refuge on the opposite bank, crossing the bridges again. But here a new danger awaited them. General S  narmont's artillery, having drawn near the town, took the bridges in flank, and soon broke them, after killing a great number of the Russians who were crossing them in their hurried flight. All who still remained in Friedland were captured, killed, or drowned in crossing the river.

Up to this time Napoleon had, so to say, made his centre and left wing mark time. Now he pushed them rapidly forward. The Russian general, Gortschakoff, who commanded the enemy's centre and right wing, obeying merely his own courage, wished to recapture the town. This would have been of no use to him, since the bridges were broken, but that he did not know. So he dashed forwards at the head of his troops into Friedland, blazing as it was. But repulsed in front by Ney's troops, who occupied the town, and compelled to regain the open country, the enemy's general soon found himself surrounded by our centre, which pushed him back on the Alle, in front of Kloschenen. The Russians defended themselves with furious heroism, and though driven in on all sides refused to surrender. A large part fell under our bayonets, and the rest were rolled back from the top of the bank into the river, where nearly all were drowned.

The enemy's extreme right, consisting chiefly of cavalry, had attempted to carry or turn the village of Heinrichsdorf. But

repulsed briskly by our troops, it had regained the banks of the Alle, under command of General Lambert. Seeing Friedland occupied by the French, and the Russian left and centre destroyed, he rallied as many regiments as he could of the right wing, and escaped from the field of battle by descending the Alle. Night prevented the French from pursuing, so that of all the enemy's corps this alone escaped utter rout. Our victory was most complete; all the Russian artillery fell into our hands. We had taken few prisoners during the action, but the numbers of the enemy killed and wounded amounted to more than 26,000. Our loss was only 3,000 killed, and 4,000 to 5,000 wounded. Of all the battles fought by the Emperor, this the *only one*\* in which his troops outnumbered those of the enemy. The French had 80,000 combatants, the Russians only 75,000. The remains of the enemy's army marched in disorder all night, and retired behind the Pregel, destroying the bridges.

Marshals Soult, Davout, and Murat had not been able to take part in the battle, but their appearance had decided the Prussians to abandon Königsberg, and our troops took possession of it, finding there immense stores of all kinds.

No accident betell me during the battle of Friedland, although I was exposed to very great dangers on this wise. You saw me starting in the morning from Posthnen by order of Marshal Lannes to go at full speed and warn the Emperor that the enemy was crossing the Alle at Friedland, and a battle appeared imminent. Napoleon was at Eylau, and I had, therefore, nearly six leagues to go in order to meet him, which would have been a small matter for my excellent mare if the roads had been clear. But encumbered as they were by the troops of the various corps coming up with all haste to support Marshal Lannes, I found it absolutely impossible to gallop if I kept the road, so I went across country, with the result that Lisette, having had to jump fences, hedges, and ditches, was pretty well blown when I joined the Emperor, coming out of Eylau. But I had, without taking a moment's rest, to return with him to Friedland, and although this time the troops drew up to let us pass, my poor mare, who had galloped twelve leagues at a stretch, six of them across country, and on a very hot day, was completely beaten when I reached the field of

\*[The italics are the author's. Napoleon's bulletins after his battles no doubt usually contained a statement to a similar effect, but subsequent investigation tends to show that the statement was not always strictly correct.]

battle and rejoined Marshal Lannes. I saw that Lisette could do no more service during the action, so I took advantage of the moment's rest which the Emperor allowed the troops to try to find my servant and change horses. But in the midst of an army of that size how was I to find my belongings? It was impossible, so I returned to the staff, still mounted on the blown Lisette.

Marshal Lannes and my comrades, seeing the fix I was in, advised me to dismount, and let my mare rest for a few hours. At that moment I saw one of our hussars leading a horse which he had captured. I bought it, and entrusting Lisette to a trooper of the marshal's escort to take her to the rear and feed her, and hand her over to my servant whenever he saw him, I mounted my new horse, resumed my place among the aides-de-camp, and took my turns of duty. At first I was well satisfied with my mount, until Lannes sent me off to Ney, who was by that time in Friedland, to warn him of a movement which the enemy was making. Hardly was I in the town when my devil of a horse, who had behaved so well in the open country, finding himself in a little square with houses on fire all round, the pavements covered with burning furniture and timber, and many half-roasted corpses, was so terrified by the sight of the flames and the odour of burning flesh, that he refused to advance or retreat. Putting his four feet together, he stood stock still and snorted violently, without taking the slightest notice of the spur, which I vigorously applied. Meanwhile the Russians, having gained a momentary advantage in a street close by, were pushing our troops back to the place where I was, and were pouring a hail of bullets from a church tower and the neighbouring houses all about me, at the same time plying the battalions by whom I was surrounded with grape from two guns which they had dragged up. Many men fell all round me, and I was reminded of the position in which I had found myself at Eylau. As I had no curiosity whatever to see what another wound felt like, and besides, so long as I stayed there I could not fulfil my errand, I just got off, and leaving my infernal horse, slipped along the houses to go and join Ney, who was in another square which the officers pointed out to me. I remained a quarter of an hour with him: plenty of bullets were dropping there, but nothing like so many as in the place where I had left my horse. Finally, a bayonet charge drove back the Russians, and compelled them to retire on all sides towards the bridges. Ney bade me take the good news to Lannes. I returned by the same way which I had taken in coming, and passed again

the spot where I had left my horse. It had been the scene of a sanguinary fight, nothing was to be seen but dead and dying, and in the middle of them was the obstinate horse, his back broken by a cannon-ball, and his body riddled with bullets.

I hurried on to the end of the suburbs, for burning houses were falling down on all sides, and I feared to be buried in the ruins. At last I got out of the town, and reached the edge of the lake. The heat of the day, combined with that of the fire in the streets which I had passed through, had made me steam. I was half-suffocated and dropping with fatigue and hard work; for I had passed the night on horse-back coming from Eylau to Friedland; then I had galloped again to Eylau and back, and had eaten nothing since the previous day. I did not therefore enjoy the prospect of having to cross on foot under a burning sun and through tall corn the immense plain which lay between me and Posthenen, where I had left Marshal Lannes; but fortune stood my friend. Grouchy's division of dragoons, which had been briskly engaged with the enemy close by, though victorious, had lost a certain number of men, and the colonels had as usual ordered the horses of the killed to be collected and led by a detachment at a distance from the rest. I caught sight of this picket, every man of which was leading four or five horses, as it was making for the lake to water them. I spoke to the officer, who, finding so many led horses in the way, was only too glad to let me take one, which I promised to send back to the regiment in the evening. He even selected for me an excellent animal which had been ridden by a sergeant killed in the charge. I mounted, and returned quickly towards Posthenen.

Three days after the memorable battle of Friedland the French army came in sight of the town of Tilsit and the Niemen, which at this point is only a few leagues distant from the Russian frontier. After a battle it is all pain and grief in the rear of a victorious army, whose march is marked out by dead, dying, and wounded, while the surviving warriors, soon forgetting their fallen comrades, are rejoicing in their success and gaily marching on to new adventures. Great was the joy of our soldiers at seeing the Niemen, whose opposite bank was occupied by the remains of that Russian army which they had so often met and beaten. Our troops sang, while a gloomy silence reigned in the enemy's camp. The Emperor took up his quarters at Tilsit, while the troops encamped round the town. The Niemen lay between the two armies, the French being on the left bank, the Russians on the right. The

Emperor Alexander requested an interview with Napoleon, and it took place on June 25 in a pavilion set up on a raft, which was anchored in mid-stream, in full view of the two armies. It was a most imposing spectacle. The two Emperors arrived from each side attended by five of the principal personages of their army Marshal Lannes, who had flattered himself that he had this claim to accompany the Emperor, saw Marshal Bessières, Murat's intimate friend, preferred to him, and never forgave those marshals for what he considered an unfair piece of favour.

So Marshal Lannes stayed with us on the quay at Tilsit, whence we saw the two Emperors meet and embrace amid loud cheers from both camps. Next day at another interview in the same pavilion the Emperor of Russia presented to Napoleon his unfortunate friend, the King of Prussia. This prince, who through the chances of war had lost a vast kingdom, of which only the little town of Memel and a few poor villages remained to him, preserved an attitude worthy of the descendant of the great Frederick. Napoleon received him politely but coldly, because he thought he had reason to complain of him. Besides, he was planning the confiscation of a large part of his state.

In order to facilitate the intercourse of the two Emperors the town of Tilsit was declared neutral, and Napoleon ceded half of it to the Emperor of Russia, who took up his quarters there with his guard. The two sovereigns passed some twenty days together, during which they arranged the destiny of Europe. The King of Prussia meanwhile was relegated to the right bank, and was not even lodged in Tilsit, only coming there very rarely. One day Napoleon went to call on the unfortunate Queen of Prussia, who was said to be in great grief. He invited her to dinner on the following day, which she accepted, doubtless much against the grain. But at the moment of concluding peace, it was very necessary to appease the victor. Napoleon and the Queen of Prussia hated each other cordially. She had insulted him in many proclamations, and he had given it her back in his bulletins. Yet their interview showed no traces of their mutual hatred. Napoleon was respectful and attentive, the Queen gracious and disposed to captivate her former enemy. She had all the more need to do so, being well aware that the treaty of peace created under the title of Kingdom of Westphalia a new state, whose territory was to be contributed by electoral Hesse and Prussia.



The Queen could resign herself to the loss of several provinces, but she could not make up her mind to part with the strong place of Magdeburg, the retaining of which would be Prussia's safeguard. On his side, Napoleon, who proposed to make his brother Jerome King of Westphalia, wished to add Magdeburg to the new state. It is said that in order to retain this important town, the Queen of Prussia, during dinner, used all the methods of friendliness until Napoleon, to change the conversation, praised a superb rose that the Queen was wearing. The story goes that she said, "Will your Majesty have this rose in exchange for Magdeburg?" Perhaps it would have been chivalrous to accept, but the Emperor was too practical a man to let himself be caught by a pretty offer, and it is averred that while praising the beauty of the rose and of the hand which offered it, he did not take the flower. The Queen's eyes filled with tears, but the victor affected not to perceive it. He kept Magdeburg and escorted the Queen politely to the boat which was to take her across to the other side.

In placing his brother Jerome on the throne of Westphalia, Napoleon added to the mistakes which he had already made when he gave the kingdom of Naples to Joseph, and that of Holland to Louis. The people felt themselves humiliated by being compelled to obey strangers, who, so far from having done anything great themselves, were utter nullities, whose only merit lay in being Napoleon's brothers. The hatred and contempt which these new kings brought on themselves contributed very largely to the fall of the Emperor.

Peace being concluded, the two Emperors parted with mutual assurances of attachment, which at that time appeared sincere.

## CHAPTER XVI

*I PASSED* the autumn and winter with my mother at Paris, and took part in the numerous entertainments which were given, the finest being the reception given by the city to the imperial guard on their return. Thus ended the year 1807, in which I had incurred so many dangers and led so chequered a life.

In the course of January, Napoleon at length replied to the King of Spain, but in an evasive fashion, for, without positively

refusing to give the hand of one of his nieces to the Prince of the Asturias, he put off the date of the marriage indefinitely. The alarm of the court of Madrid at the receipt of this answer was increased by hearing that more French troops were on the march towards Catalonia and Aragon, which, with the army in Portugal, would raise the Emperor's forces in the Peninsula to 125,000 men. Finally, Napoleon in great part lifted the veil under which his plans had been hidden. Under the pretext of sending troops on board the French fleet stationed at Cadiz, he caused a powerful army corps to advance in February towards Madrid, through which the road from Bayonne to Cadiz passes, and named Prince Murat *generalissimo* of all the French forces in Spain.

I had now been in Paris more than six months, and although Marshal Augereau, to whom I was still aide-de-camp, was far from anticipating the war which was about to break out in the Peninsula, he thought it neither right nor conducive to my advance in my profession that I should stay at Paris when a large army was assembled beyond the Pyrenees. Being himself still kept in France by the effects of his wound, he took me to Prince Murat to ask him to attach me provisionally to his staff. I have already said that my father, who belonged to the same part of the country as Murat, had done him many kindnesses. Murat, who had always shown himself grateful, consented very readily to take me until such time as Augereau should have a command. I was well satisfied with this decision, although the position of a supernumerary officer has its inconveniences, but I was anxious to show zeal, I reckoned on the Emperor's goodwill, and, further, I was glad to go back to Spain and witness the great events which were in progress there. Considerable expense was necessary to make a fitting appearance on the staff of Murat, which at that time was the most brilliant in the army, but this was made easy to me by what was left of my splendid travelling allowances during and after the Friedland campaign. So I bought three good horses, with which my servant, Woirland, was to await me at Bayonne, whither I went when I had got my new uniforms.

Part of the troops which Murat was to command were, perhaps, already in Castile. He entered Spain on March 10, and in five days we were at Burgos. From this time Murat regulated his march on that of the columns, and passed in succession to Valladolid in Segovia. The Spaniards, always flattering themselves that the French had come to protect the Prince of the Asturias,

received our troops very well, though again astonished by their extreme youth and want of robustness, for, under some incomprehensible delusion, Napoleon had persisted in sending into the Peninsula none but newly-raised regiments.

We occupied in Spain none but open towns, and two fortified places only, Barcelona and Pampeluna. But as their citadels and forts were still in the hands of the Spanish troops, the Emperor ordered his generals to try to get possession of them. To this end a thoroughly base trick was employed. The Spanish Government, while forbidding its generals to let us occupy the citadels and the forts, had ordered that the French troops should be received as friends, and everything done for their comfort. The commanders of our regiments asked permission to place their sick and their stores in the citadels, which was granted. Then they disguised their grenadiers as sick, and hid arms in the provision sacks of several companies, who, under pretext of going to the store houses for bread, made their way into the place and disarmed the Spaniards. In this way, General Duhesme, with only 5,000 men, got possession of the citadel of Barcelona and of Fort Monjuich. The citadel of Pampeluna and nearly all those in Catalonia shared the same fate.

[The Queen and the Prince of the Peace were at Aranjuez, persisting in their intention of retiring to America if matters got worse. Ferdinand, however, still hoping to obtain the hand of Napoleon's niece, saw in us only liberators, and with the support of many of the Royal Family and of the ministers, refused to follow the Queen and Godoy. At the sight of the preparations for a journey, the population and garrison of Aranjuez understood the facts and their indignation spread to Madrid. Nevertheless, the King was on the point of starting on the morning of March 16. But the people, with the support of the troops, rose and opposed his departure. Charles submitted, and a proclamation, stating that he would not go, quieted the crowd. But in the course of the night their numbers were swelled by the garrison and part of the population of Madrid, as well as peasants from the neighbourhood. Godoy's house was broken into and sacked, his guard of hussars dispersed by the King's body-guard, and the crowd went in search of the favourite himself. In order to save his life, the ministers persuaded the King to sign a decree degrading the Prince of the Peace from all his titles and dignities. At the news the crowd broke out into wild rejoicings, in which Ferdinand had the bad taste to take part.

All this time Godoy was actually concealed in his own palace, rolled up in some matting in a loft. The place had been searched, but he had not been discovered. He passed forty-eight hours in this position, and only came out when constrained by hunger. Then, however, he was promptly arrested by a sentry and handed over to the populace. He had received several wounds, when a picket of the body-guard, less cruel than the majority of their comrades, tore him from the hands of his tormentors, and got him away into the very same barrack where, twenty years before, he had been himself admitted as a soldier in the body-guard.]

On learning the arrest of their favourite, the King and Queen, in fear for his life, appealed to the generosity of the Prince of the Asturias and implored him to use his influence to release Godoy from the hands of the insurgents. Ferdinand arrived at the barracks just at the moment when the crowd was breaking in the gates. On his promise that Godoy should be brought to trial the mob retired respectfully. The prisoner was courageously awaiting his death when he saw the heir to the throne enter the stable where he was lying in his blood. At the sight of his personal foe he recovered all his energy, and when Ferdinand said to him with a generosity whether genuine or feigned, "I pardon you," Godoy replied with true Castilian pride, made all the more notable by his unhappy condition, "The King alone has the right to pardon, and you are not King yet." Half an hour later the crown was on the head of the Prince of the Asturias.

[On Ferdinand's return to the palace, the King and Queen, seeing no better way of calming the populace, abdicated in favour of their son. Instantly a frenzy of joy spread from Aranjuez to Madrid and throughout Spain, no man thinking that the approach of the French might disturb their happiness. At that moment Napoleon's troops were descending from the heights of Somo Sierra and of the Guadarrama. One column was at Buitrago and the other near the Escorial; Murat, with 30,000 men, was within a day's march of Madrid. Meanwhile Ferdinand VII, as he may now be called, was not without anxiety. He again sent to the Emperor asking for the hand of his niece, and despatched the Duke of Parqué to explain the state of affairs to Murat. Then he organized his ministry and recalled his friends, including the canon Escoiquiz.] It was on March 19, just as Murat's staff was traversing the Guadarrama Mountains, that we received the first news of the rising at Aranjuez. The next day we heard of Charles's abdication and

Ferdinand's accession. Murat hastened forward, and on the 21st his head-quarters were established at the town of El Molar, a few leagues from Madrid. A fearful tumult was raging in the capital. In its ferocious joy the populace had burnt and pillaged the houses of the Prince of the Peace, his family, and his friends; they would even have been massacred but for the energetic action of Count Beauharnais, who offered them at the French embassy an asylum which no one dared violate.

On learning of the revolution, Prince Murat, usually so communicative, became gloomy and preoccupied, and passed several days without speaking to any of us. Doubtless, in his place, amid a country turned upside down, any other marshal would have found his task very difficult; but Murat's personal position made it still more complicated. Seeing three of the Emperor's brothers already provided with crowns, while the fourth, Lucien, had declined one, Murat might well flatter himself that Napoleon's intention was to give him the throne of Spain if the Royal Family deserted their country and fled to America. He much regretted, therefore, the accession of Ferdinand, whom the Spanish nation adored and to whom it would rally. Therefore Murat, grounding his action on the fact that he had no orders from the Emperor to recognize Ferdinand VII, continued in his letters to give him the title of Prince of the Asturias, and advised Charles IV to repudiate an abdication which had been extorted from him by revolt and threats.

Murat established himself in a palace belonging to the Prince of the Peace, the only one which the mob had spared, under the impression that it still belonged to the crown. I was lodged hard by with a much respected member of the Council of the Indies. Hardly had I alighted when Prince Murat, hearing that Godoy's enemies were sending him to prison at Madrid, no doubt to have him murdered there, and that the poor wretch was already at the gate of the town, ordered me to set out with a squadron of dragoons, and prevent at any cost the entry of the Prince of the Peace into the capital, letting the officers of his escort know that he, Murat, would hold them responsible for their prisoner's life. Two leagues from the suburbs I came upon Godoy. Although the unhappy man was terribly wounded and covered with blood, the guards who escorted him had been cruel enough to put irons on his hands and feet, and to tie him on a rough open cart where he was exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, and to thousands of flies attracted by his wounds, which were scarcely covered

with coarse linen rags. I was indignant at the sight, and glad to see that it produced the same effect on the French squadron which accompanied me. Not without some show of force I obliged Godoy's escort to unshackle him and put him in prison in a neighbouring town, where he would be safe.

On March 24 Ferdinand made his royal entry into Madrid, being received by the people with indescribable joy. An immense crowd greeted him with cheers, women threw flowers in his path, and men spread their cloaks under his horses' feet. Our troops did not appear officially. Murat did not even visit Ferdinand, not knowing, until the Emperor had decided, whether the father or the son was to be recognized as sovereign of Spain. If Napoleon intended to seize the crown, he would probably prefer to see it restored for the moment to the feeble Charles, rather than have the more difficult task of taking it from the nation's favourite, Ferdinand. Murat, therefore, felt pretty sure that the Emperor would refuse to recognize the new King.

Ferdinand, meanwhile, uneasy as to the view which Napoleon might take of his accession, consulted M. de Beauharnais, who, too upright a man himself to think it possible that Napoleon could take any steps against the liberty of a prince coming to seek him in the character of arbiter, advised Ferdinand to meet the Emperor at Bayonne. The King's friends doubted; but General Savary unexpectedly appeared with a letter from Napoleon, which determined him to take the course suggested. Moreover, he learnt that his father and mother were on their way to lay their version of the case before the Emperor, and it seemed well to anticipate them. The advice given by M. de Beauharnais had in fact been prompted by Murat and Savary. The Emperor had started for Bayonne on April 2, travelling slowly in order to leave time for events to mature. Ferdinand sent his brother Charles on in advance, and himself left Madrid on April 10, on the faith of Savary's assurances that Napoleon was already at Bayonne. Accompanied by that general, he reached Burgos, where he did not, as he had been led to expect, find Napoleon; but did find the roads covered with French columns on the march. His suspicions that some trap was being prepared for him were calmed by Savary's assurances that Napoleon was at Vittoria. On arriving at that town, Ferdinand learnt with some surprise that, so far from having crossed the frontier, the Emperor had not yet arrived at Bayonne. This was more than

his Spanish pride could endure; his counsellors pointed out that he had gone as far to meet a foreign sovereign as was consistent with his dignity, and in spite of all that Savary could say, he decided to go no farther. Furious at seeing his prey on the point of escaping him, the general posted off to Bayonne, and found that the Emperor had arrived on the 14th.

By the next day Ferdinand was practically a prisoner. Marshal Bessières had been secretly ordered to arrest him if he attempted to return, and Savary was coming to see that the order was executed. But no step of this kind was necessary, for Ferdinand, hearing that his parents, at the instance of his sister the ex-Queen of Etruria, were already on their way from Madrid to Bayonne, in fear of letting them get the ear of the Emperor before him, insisted on setting out at once, undeterred by the protests of the people and the forebodings of older advisers. On April 20 he crossed the Bidassoa. Not an infantry picket was there to present arms to him, nor a trooper to escort him. When at length some officers of the Emperor's household met him, they accosted him as Prince of the Asturias. It was too late to go back; Ferdinand was in France and in Napoleon's power.

The Emperor, who was occupying the château of Marac, where I had been lodged in 1803 with Augereau, called upon Ferdinand, treated him politely, and invited him to dinner, but never gave him the title of King. On the next day he threw off the mask and announced to Ferdinand and his ministers that having been charged by Providence to create a great empire and lower the power of England, and having learnt by experience that he could not count on the assistance of Spain so long as the Bourbon family governed it, he had determined to restore the crown neither to Ferdinand nor to Charles, but to place it on the head of a member of his own family. Ferdinand and his advisers, overwhelmed by this statement, refused at first to accept it, answering with some reason that in any case no member of the French imperial family had any right to the crown of Spain.

Meanwhile the old King and Queen were approaching Bayonne, which they reached on April 20. Napoleon received them with royal honours, and brought them to dine with him at the château of Marac. There they found their beloved Manuel Godoy, whom they had not seen since the outbreak of Aranjuez. Before leaving Madrid, however, they had had an interview with Murat, and implored his intervention on behalf of the Prince of the Peace. The Emperor also had instructed him that Godoy's life was to be saved at all costs.]

While great events were maturing at Bayonne, Prince Murat, who had provisionally the control of the Government at Madrid, had caused Charles's protest to be published, and Ferdinand's name to be suppressed on all public documents, much to the discontent of the people and the grandees. When the news from Bayonne arrived, brought by secret emissaries in the disguise of peasants, whom Ferdinand's friends had sent, their agitation increased. The storm was grumbling around us, nor was it long before it broke out at Madrid.

Charles IV, the Queen, Ferdinand, and his brother, Prince Charles, being all at Bayonne, the only members of the Royal Family remaining in Spain were the ex-Queen of Etruria and her son, the old Prince Anthony, and Charles IV's youngest son, Prince Francis,\* who was then only twelve or thirteen years old. Murat, having received orders to send these members of the House of Bourbon to Bayonne, the Queen of Etruria and Prince Anthony expressed themselves willing to leave Spain, but the young Prince Francis was still a ward of the Junta, and that body, in alarm at seeing all the princes of the Royal Family carried off one by one, definitely opposed the child's departure. Then public excitement became very great, and in the course of May 1 numerous groups assembled in the principal streets of Madrid, and especially in the large square known as the Puerta del Sol. These were dispersed by some of our cavalry, but on the following day, just as the princes were getting into their carriage, some servants came out of the palace exclaiming that Don Francis was crying bitterly and clinging to the furniture, declaring that he had been born in Spain and would not leave it. In an instant the mob armed itself, and massacred every Frenchman who was caught alone by himself in the town. Most of our troops being camped outside, it was necessary to warn them, and this it was not easy to do.

On hearing the first shots I wished to go to my post near the marshal, whose hotel was close to my lodging. I leapt on my horse, and was going out, when my host, a venerable member of the Indian Council, stopped me, pointing out that the street was occupied by some thirty armed insurgents, whom it was clear that I could not escape. I remarked to the excellent man that my honour required me to brave all dangers in order to get to my general. He advised me to go out on foot, and leading me

\*[Francisco de Paula, afterwards father of Francisco d'Assis, sometime king-consort of Spain.]



to the end of the garden, opened a little gate, and very kindly himself led me by back lanes to the rear of Prince Murat's house, where I found a French sentry. This much respected gentleman, to whom in all probability I owed my life, was, as I shall never forget, called Don Antonio Hernandez.

No military duty is more dangerous than that of a staff officer in a country, still more in a city, which is in a state of insurrection. Having to go almost always alone through the midst of the enemy when carrying orders to the troops, he is exposed to the risk of assassination without the power of defending himself. Hardly was Murat out of his palace when he sent off officers to all the officers round Madrid with orders to bring the troops in by all the gates at once. The cavalry of the imperial guard and a division of dragoons were quartered at Buen Retiro. This was one of the nearest camps to head-quarters, but one of the most dangerous to reach, since, in order to get there, it was necessary to go through the two largest streets of the town, those of Alcalá and San Geronimo, where nearly every window was lined with Spanish sharpshooters. I need not say that, as this was the most difficult mission, the commander-in-chief did not assign it to one of his regular aides-de-camp. It was on me that it devolved, and I started at a smart trot over a pavement which the sun had made very slippery.

I had hardly gone two hundred yards when I was received by numerous musket-shots, but as the tumult was but just beginning, the fire was endurable, all the more so since the men at the windows were shopkeepers and workmen, without much practice in handling muskets. Still the horse of one of my dragoons was knocked over by a bullet, and the people came out of the houses to slaughter the poor soldier : but his comrades and I laid about us with our sabres, and when we had stretched a dozen of the rioters on the ground the rest took to their heels. Then the dragoon, taking the hand of one of his comrades, was able to run with us till we reached the outposts of our cavalry camp.

While defending the dismounted dragoon, I had received a blow from a dagger in my jacket sleeve, and two of my troopers had been slightly wounded. My orders were to bring the divisions to the Puerta del Sol, and they started at a gallop. The squadrons of the guard, commanded by the celebrated Daumesnil, marched first, with the Mamelukes leading. The riot had had time to increase ; we were fired upon from nearly all the houses, especially the palace of the Duke of Híjar, where every window

was lined with good shots. We lost there several men, among others the terrible Mustapha, that Mameluke who went near to catching the Grand Duke Constantine at Austerlitz. His comrades swore to avenge him, but for the moment it was impossible to halt, and the cavalry rode on rapidly under a hail of bullets. In the Puerta del Sol we found Murat engaged with a huge compact crowd of armed men, among whom could be seen some thousands of Spanish soldiers, who had brought guns, and were firing on the French with grape. On seeing the dreaded Mamelukes arrive, the Spaniards made some attempt at resistance, but the sight of the *Turks* alarmed the bravest of them too much for their resolution to last long. The Mamelukes, dashing scimitar in hand into the dense mass, sent a hundred heads flying in a trice, and opened a way for the chasseurs and dragoons, who set to furiously with their sabres. The Spaniards, rolled back from the square, tried to escape by the many wide streets which meet there from all parts of the town, but they were stopped by other French columns whom Murat had bidden to rendezvous at that point. There were also partial combats in other quarters, but this was the most important, and decided the victory in our favour. The insurgents had 1,200 or 1,500 men killed and many wounded, and their loss would have been much greater if Murat had not given the order to cease firing.

Thus the fight was ended and victory assured. Murat had now to attend to two important matters: to report to the Emperor what had happened at Madrid, and to secure the departure of the Queen of Etruria, the old Prince Anthony, and above all the young Don Francis. The child, frightened by the sound of the firing, now agreed to go with his sister and his uncle, but this party could only travel by short stages, while it was important that Murat's despatches should reach the Emperor by the first possible moment. You will guess what happened. So long as Spain had been tranquil, the Prince had entrusted his frequent reports to members of his regular staff; but now that it was a question of crossing a great part of the kingdom in the midst of a population who, at the news of fighting at Madrid, would be ready to murder French officers, it became a job for a supernumerary aide-de-camp. As I quite expected, although according to the roster for duty it was not my turn to go, this dangerous mission was entrusted to me, and I accepted it without remark.

Murat, who quite misjudged the Castilian character, imagined

that they would be frightened by the suppression of the revolt at Madrid, and would make a complete submission without venturing to take up arms. As he flattered himself that Napoleon destined him for the throne of Charles IV he was beaming, and, as he handed me the despatches, said more than once : " You may repeat to the Emperor what I say in this letter ; my victory over the insurgents in the capital assures *us* the peaceable possession of Spain." I did not believe a word of it, but was careful not to say so, and merely asked permission to take advantage as far as Buitrago of the escort which was going with the Spanish princes. I knew that many peasants from the neighbourhood who had taken part in the outbreak were now hiding in the country villages, and would be quite ready to attack me if I left the town. Murat recognized the justice of my remark. I hired a horse, and travelling with the escort reached Buitrago that evening. The princes were to sleep there, so from that point there was no more escort for me, and I had to launch out into the unknown.

Our dragoon officers, seeing me make ready to start at night-fall to cross the Guadarrama Mountains, advised me to wait for daylight. But in the first place I knew that the despatches were urgent, and I did not wish the Emperor and Murat to accuse me of having slackened my pace through fear, and further I knew that the quicker I got away from the neighbourhood of the capital, and outstripped the news of the fighting, the less I should have to fear the exasperation of the people on my road. I found, in fact, that the inhabitants of Buitrago had received their first news of what had happened that morning at Madrid from the muleteers who conducted the princes' carriages, but as the postilion whom I took from Buitrago had probably heard the news from the one who had brought me there, I resolved to get rid of him by a trick. After we had gone about two leagues, I told the man that I had left in the stable of the post a handkerchief containing 20 duros (£4), and that while I considered the money as practically lost, I thought it was still just possible that no one had found it, and that he must therefore go back at once to Buitrago, and that if he brought me the handkerchief and its contents at the next stage, where I would wait for him, he should have five duros for himself. Delighted with the prospect of this wind-fall, the postilion turned back at once, and I went on to the next stage. Nothing had been heard there of the fighting ; I was in uniform : but to remove any suspicion which the postmaster and his people might have at seeing me arrive alone, I told them

that the horse of the postilion who had been with me having fallen and hurt himself, I had advised the man to walk him back to Buitrago. They gave me at once a fresh horse and another postilion, and I galloped off without any qualms about disappointing the Buitrago postilion. The important thing was, that I was now in sole possession of my secret, and I knew that if I stopped nowhere, I could reach Bayonne before rumour had brought the intelligence of the events at Madrid.

From Madrid to Bayonne is the same distance as from Bayonne to Paris ; that is to say 225 leagues, a long journey when one has to ride post with one's sword by one's side without a single quarter of an hour's rest, and in a scorching heat. I was tired out and overcome with the need of sleep, but I did not yield to it for a moment, knowing well the necessity for getting on quickly. To keep awake I paid the postilions something extra on condition that as we galloped they should sing to me their Spanish songs. At last I saw the Bidassoa, and entered France.

Marac is only two stages from Saint-Jean de Luz. I got there on May 5, covered with dust, at the moment when the Emperor was taking an after-dinner walk in the park with the Queen of Spain on his arm and Charles IV. beside him. The Empress Josephine and the Princes Ferdinand and Charles followed them, and the rear was brought up by Marshal Duroc and several ladies. As soon as the Emperor was informed by the aide-de-camp on duty that an officer had arrived with despatches from Prince Murat, he came towards me, followed by the members of the Spanish Royal Family, and asked aloud : " What news from Madrid ? " The presence of the listeners was embarrassing, and as I thought that Napoleon would no doubt be glad to have the first fruits of my intelligence, I deemed it wise to do nothing but present my despatches to the Emperor and look steadily at him without answering his question. His Majesty understood me, and retired a few paces to read Murat's report. Having finished, he called me and we went towards a solitary garden-walk, asking me all the time many questions about the fighting at Madrid. I could easily see that he shared Murat's opinion and considered that the victory of May 2 must put an end to all resistance in Spain. I held the contrary belief, and if Napoleon had asked my view I should have thought it dishonourable to conceal it ; but I had to confine myself to answering the Emperor's questions with due respect, and I could only indirectly let him know my presentiments. In narrating the revolution at Madrid I depicted

in most vivid terms the despair of the people at hearing that the remaining members of the Royal Family were to be carried away, the fierce courage which the inhabitants, even the women, had shown, during the fighting, the gloomy and threatening demeanour retained by the populace after our victory. I might perhaps have revealed all my thoughts, but Napoleon cut short my thoughts, exclaiming: "Bah! they will calm down and will bless me as soon as they see their country freed from the discredit and disorder into which it has been thrown by the weakest and most corrupt administration that ever existed." After this outburst, uttered in a sharp tone, Napoleon sent me back to the end of the garden to request the King and Queen of Spain to come to him, and followed me slowly reading over Murat's despatches. The ex-sovereigns came forward alone to meet the Emperor, and I suppose he informed them of the fighting at Madrid, for Charles came up quickly to his son Ferdinand, and said to him in a loud voice and in a tone of extreme anger: "Wretch! you may now be satisfied! Madrid has been bathed in the blood of my subjects shed in consequence of your criminal rebellion against your father; may their blood be on your head!" The Queen joined in heaping bitter reproaches on her son, and went so far as to offer to strike him. The ladies and the officers, feeling that this distasteful spectacle was not one for them, withdrew, and Napoleon put a stop to it.

Ferdinand, who had not replied by a single word to the oburgations of his parents, resigned the crown to his father that evening, less through contrition than through fear of being regarded as the author of the conspiracy which had overthrown Charles. Next day the old King, in his ignoble desire for revenge, encouraged by the Queen and the Prince of the Peace, made over to the Emperor all his rights to the throne of Spain on certain conditions, the principal one being that by which he was to have the estate of Compiègne with a pension of seven and a half million francs. Ferdinand was cowardly enough also to renounce his hereditary rights in favour of Napoleon, in return for a pension of a million and the château of Navarre in Normandy. As both these houses required repair, Charles, with his Queen, his daughter, and the Prince of the Peace, went for the present to Fontainebleau, while Ferdinand, his two brothers, and his uncle were sent to Valençay, in Berri, where they were well treated but kept under strict surveillance. Thus was consummated the most iniquitous spoliation which modern history

records. In all times a conqueror in a fair and open war has been held to have the right to take possession of the dominions of the conquered, but I can say with sincerity that the conduct of Napoleon in this scandalous affair was unworthy of so great a man. To offer himself as mediator between a father and a son in order to draw them into a trap and then plunder them both—this was an odious atrocity which history has branded, and which Providence did not delay to punish. It was the war in Spain which brought about Napoleon's fall.

Having now this fine kingdom to dispose of, Napoleon offered it to his eldest brother, Joseph, then King of Naples. He has been blamed for not giving it to his brother-in-law Murat, who, as an experienced soldier, seemed better suited to govern a proud nation than the timid, careless, and luxurious Joseph. Doubtless when Murat first entered Spain everything about him, even to his extraordinary costume, delighted the Castilians, and if they had had then to accept a King from Napoleon's family they would have preferred the chivalrous Murat to the feeble Joseph; but since the fighting at Madrid their admiration for him had been changed to bitter hatred. I have no doubt that the Emperor had originally destined Murat for the Spanish throne, but as soon as he realized the dislike of the nation towards him he gave up the plan as impossible, and sent him to replace Joseph at Naples when he gave the Spanish crown to the latter. It was unfortunate, for in the war which presently broke out Murat would have been most useful, while King Joseph was only a hindrance.

I had left Bayonne on May 11 to return to Madrid with despatches from the Emperor to Murat. Throughout the provinces which I traversed I found people's minds much disturbed. It was known that Ferdinand, the darling of the people, had been forced to abdicate, and they perceived that Napoleon was about to grasp the throne of Spain. An organized insurrection was growing up on either side. I should certainly have been assassinated had not our troops been in occupation of all the towns and villages between France and Madrid. Though I had an escort from one post to another, I was more than once attacked. A trooper was killed by my side in the defile of Pancorvo, and I came across the dead bodies of two of our soldiers in the mountains of Somo Sierra. It was the first taste of what the Spaniards were preparing for us.

The despatches which I carried to Murat contained the

official announcement of his elevation to the throne of Naples. For several days he was very gloomy, and at last fell so seriously ill that Napoleon had to send General Savary to take the command of the army—a task to which his military talents were unequal, especially in the difficult circumstances which were about to occur. Murat's illness for a time endangered his life. As soon as he was better he made haste to leave Spain. Before his departure he asked me if I would stay at Madrid with General Belliard, who wished to keep me. I had foreseen this question, and as it by no means suited me, after serving under several marshals and a prince, to be lost in the obscure crowd of the officers on the general staff and to do postman's work under fire, earning no glory nor hope of promotion, I answered that I was still Marshal Augereau's aide-de-camp, that he had agreed to my doing duty with Prince Murat, but that when Murat left Spain I considered my mission at an end, and asked leave to return to my former chief. So I left Madrid with Murat on June 17. We travelled by easy stages, and reached Bayonne on July 3. There Murat took the title of King of Naples. The officers of his staff going to congratulate him, he proposed to us to follow him into Italy, promising rapid promotion to those who would take service with him. All accepted except Major Lamothe and myself; for I had firmly resolved to wear no uniform but that of the French army. Leaving my horses at Bayonne, I returned to Paris, and passed three happy months with my mother and Marshal Augereau.

The combat of May 2 and the abduction of the Royal Family had made the nation furious. Every province rose against Joseph's Government, and though he reached Madrid and was proclaimed on July 23, he had no authority in the country.

The French army would thus have been in a critical condition, with the whole of Spain in arms against it, even if it had been under the orders of an able general, and its composition as strong as it actually was weak. General Dupont, whom Savary had imprudently despatched without support into Andalusia, found at the beginning of July that the people were all rising round him, and, learning that 10,000 men from the camp of San Roque were advancing under the orders of General Castaños, resolved to withdraw towards Madrid, and with that view sent Vedel's division to occupy the Sierra Morena and reopen communications. But, instead of following his advanced guard promptly, Dupont, who from an excellent general of division had become a very bad

commander of an army corps, resolved to give battle where he stood, and ordered Vedel's division, which was already ten leagues away, to come back. This was the first mistake, and besides this, Dupont scattered the troops that remained with him, and lost precious time at Andujar, on the banks of the Guadalquivir.

The Spaniards, reinforced by several Swiss regiments, took advantage of this delay to send part of their troops over to the bank opposite to that which our army occupied; so that we found ourselves between two fires. But Dupont had handled his troops so badly that on arriving before the defile of Baylen the rear of the column was three leagues from the head. Then, instead of bringing his force together, General Dupont sent each regiment and each gun into action as they came up. Our weak young soldiers, exhausted by fifteen hours' marching and eight hours' fighting, were dropping with weariness under the rays of an Andalusian sun. The most part could neither march nor bear arms any longer, and lay down instead of fighting. Then Dupont asked for a truce, which the Spaniards were all the more ready to accept that they feared matters might shortly change to their disadvantage.

The capitulation of Baylen, as may be supposed, caused the insurrection to spread widely, nor did the defeat of the army of the Asturias by Bessières do anything to check it. The Spanish contingent, under General La Romana, which had served under Napoleon, and had been left on the coast of the Baltic, was brought back with the help of the English. The fortresses which the Spaniards still held were defended vigorously, and open towns, following the lead of Saragossa, turned themselves into fortresses. The Spanish army of Andalusia was set free to march on Madrid, and King Joseph with an army corps retreated beyond the Ebro, where the remainder of our troops raising the sieges in which they were engaged gradually assembled. Soon we learnt a new disaster. Portugal, owing to the imprudence with which Junot had scattered his forces, had been lost to us. Attacked by Sir Arthur Wellesley at Vim-eira with superior forces,\* he had been compelled to capitulate. That day marked the beginning of Wellesley's fame and fortune; he was the junior lieutenant-general in the English army, and commanded that day only in consequence of a delay in the landing of his seniors. The terms of capitulation were that the French army should evacuate Portugal and be taken back to France by

\*[English, about 16,000 men (not more than half of whom were engaged) and 18 guns, French, 14,000 men and 3 guns.]



sea without being disarmed. They were faithfully executed by the English ; but instead of being landed at Bordeaux, the troops were taken to Lorient.

By this time Napoleon had ordered up from Germany three army corps of infantry and much cavalry—all veterans who had fought at Jena, Eylau, and Friedland. To these he added a large portion of his guard, and prepared to set out himself for Spain, at their head. Their number amounted to more than 100,000, which, with the divisions already in Spain, would raise our army to 200,000 men.

Some days before starting, the Emperor, intending to take Augereau with him if the wound he had received at Eylau allowed him to take the command, had summoned him to Saint-Cloud. Being on duty, I accompanied the marshal, and while Napoleon walked about with Augereau I stayed on one side with his aides-de-camp. It appears that after discussing the matter which they had in hand their conversation turned on the battle of Eylau, and the noble conduct of the 14th. Augereau spoke of the devoted manner in which I had carried orders to that regiment through the swarming Cossacks, and entered into full details of the dangers which I had run in accomplishing that mission, and of the really miraculous manner in which I had escaped death after being stripped and left naked on the snow. The Emperor replied : " Marbot's conduct was admirable, and I have given him the Cross for it." The marshal having quite correctly declared that I had received no reward, Napoleon maintained his statement, and in order to prove it sent for Prince Berthier, the adjutant-general. He looked through the registers, the result of his search being the discovery that the Emperor, on hearing of my exploit at Eylau, had indeed entered the name of Marbot, aide-de-camp to Marshal Augereau among the officers to be decorated. He had, however, not added my Christian name, not knowing that my brother was on the marshal's staff as supernumerary ; so that when the time came to deliver the patents, Prince Berthier, always very busy, had said, to save his secretary trouble, " The Cross must be given to the elder." So my brother got decorated, though it was his first action, and, since he was only on temporary leave from the Indies, and his regiment was at the Isle of France, he did not officially even belong to the Grand Army. Thus was fulfilled the prediction which Augereau had expressed to him when he said, " If you come on the same staff as your brother you will do each other harm." Anyhow, after scolding Berthier a little, the Emperor came towards me,

spoke to me kindly, and, taking the Cross from one of his orderly officers, fastened it on my breast. October 29, 1808, was one of the happiest days of my life. At that time the Legion of Honour had not been lavishly given, and a value was attached to it which, since then it has unfortunately lost. Decorated at 26! I was beside myself with joy. The good marshal's satisfaction was equal to mine, and in order to allow my mother to share it he took me to her. No promotion that I ever got pleased her as much. To complete my satisfaction, Marshal Duroc sent for the hat which a cannon-ball had pierced on my head at the battle of Eylau, and which the Emperor wished to see.

By Napoleon's own advice, Augereau declined to go on the campaign. Accordingly, he asked Lannes, who had a command in Spain, kindly to take me with him; not, however, as supernumerary, in which capacity I had been with that marshal in the Friedland campaign, but as a regular member of the staff; but if Augereau returned to duty, I was to go back to him. So in November I set out for Bayonne, where, for the fourth time, I was to report myself to a new chief. My outfit had been left there, and was all ready for me. Indeed, I was able to lend the marshal a horse, as his had not yet come when the Emperor crossed the frontier. I knew the country through which we had to pass, and the ways of it, well; the language a little; so that I was able to be of some use to the marshal, who had never been in those parts before.

Nearly all the officers who had been on Lannes' staff having got promotion at the Peace of Tilsit, the marshal was obliged to form a new staff for Spain. He himself was a man of strong character; but from various causes he was obliged to select officers most of whom, for one reason or another, had had little experience of war. They were all brave enough; but it was the least military staff on which I had ever served.

On my joining the staff, Marshal Lannes warned me that he reckoned very much on my help, both on account of the report of me which he had received from Augereau and from the manner in which I had served under himself in the Friedland campaign. "If you do not get killed," said he, "I will see that your promotion comes quickly." The marshal never promised in vain, and he was in such high favour with the Emperor that everything was possible to him. I promised to do my duty with unswerving courage and zeal.

We left Bayonne and marched with the troops as far as the

Ebro, where we joined King Joseph and the army which had made the recent campaign. Rest in camp life had given these young recruits a military air, which they had been far from having in the previous July. But what most raised their tone was finding themselves under the command of the Emperor in person, and hearing that the veterans of the Grand Army had arrived. The Spaniards on their side were astonished and alarmed at the sight of the old grenadiers of the Grand Army, and realized that a change in the aspect of affairs was going to take place. And, indeed, hardly had the Emperor arrived on the Ebro when he launched numerous columns across the river. All that tried to make head against them were exterminated, or saved themselves only by a rapid flight. The Spaniards, however, astonished but not discouraged, rallied several army corps under the walls of Burgos, and made bold to accept battle. It took place on November 9 and did not last long, for the enemy, driven in at the first charge, fled in all directions, pursued by our cavalry, with heavy loss.

At Burgos I found my brother, who was on the staff of Prince Berthier, chief of the general staff. Lannes' military talent increased every day, and the Emperor, who had a very high opinion of him, no longer gave him any stated command, wishing to keep him about his person and send him wherever things had got into disorder, being sure that he would quickly set them to rights. Thus, considering that he had left the town of Saragossa occupied by the insurgents of Aragon, and supported by the army of Castaños, which had conquered Dupont, and that old General Moncey was only bungling, Napoleon ordered Lannes to go to Logroño, take command of the Army of the Ebro, and attack Castaños. Thus Moncey came under the orders of Lannes. It was the first case in which one marshal of the Empire had commanded another. Lannes showed himself worthy of this mark of confidence and distinction. He started, accompanied by his staff alone, and we travelled by post. You must know that at this time there were no draught horses in Spain, but the post-houses kept the best nags in Europe. We rode therefore night and day, escorted from stage to stage by detachments of cavalry. In this way we went back as far as Miranda del Ebro, whence we reached Logroño, following the river. Marshal Moncey appeared much annoyed at finding himself, the senior marshal, placed under the orders of the junior, but he had no choice but to obey.

See what the presence of a single capable and energetic man can do. This army of recruits, which Moncey had not dared to lead against the enemy, were set in motion by Lannes on the day of his arrival, and marched against the enemy with ardour. We came up with him on the following day, the 23rd, in front of Tudela, and after three hours' fighting the conquerors of Baylen were driven in, beaten, completely routed, and fled headlong towards Saragossa, leaving thousands of dead on the field. We captured a great many men, several colours, and all the artillery ; a complete victory.

## CHAPTER XVII

*I HAVE* now reached one of the most terrible experiences of my military career. Marshal Lannes had just won a great victory, and the next day, after having received the reports of the generals, he wrote his despatch for one of our officers to take to the Emperor. Napoleon's practice was to give a step to the officer who brought him the news of an important success, and the marshals on their side entrusted such tasks to officers for whose speedy promotion they were anxious. It was a form of recommendation which Napoleon never failed to recognize. Marshal Lannes did me the honour of appointing me to carry the news of the victory of Tudela, and I could indulge the hope of being major before long. But, alas ! I had yet much blood to lose before I reached that rank.

The high road from Bayonne to Madrid by Vittoria, Miranda del Ebro, Burgos, and Aranda forks off at Miranda from that leading to Saragossa by Logroño. A road from Tudela to Aranda across the mountains about Soria forms the third side of a great triangle. While Lannes was reaching Tudela the Emperor had advanced from Burgos to Aranda. It was, therefore, much shorter for me to go from Tudela to Aranda than by way of Miranda del Ebro. The latter road, however, had the advantage of being covered by the French armies ; while the other, no doubt, would be full of Spanish fugitives who had taken refuge after Tudela in the mountains. The Emperor, however, had informed Lannes that he was sending Ney's corps direct from Aranda to Tudela ; so, thinking Ney to be at no great distance, and that an advanced force which he had pushed on the day after the battle to get touch of him at Taragona would secure me from

attack as far as Aranda, Lannes ordered me to take the shortest road. I may frankly admit that if I had had my choice I should have preferred to make the round by Miranda and Burgos ; but the marshal's orders were positive, and how could I express any fear for my own person in the presence of a man who knew no more fear for others than he did for himself ?

Just as I was starting from Tudela, Major Saint-Mars hazarded a remark intended to dissuade Lannes from sending me over the mountains. The marshal, however, answered, " Oh, he will meet Ney's advance guard to-night, and find troops echeloned all the way to the Emperor's head-quarters." This was too decided for any opposition, so I left Tudela on November 4th, at nightfall, with a detachment of cavalry, and got without any trouble as far as Taragona, at the foot of the mountains. In this little town I found Lannes' advance guard. The officer in command, hearing nothing of Ney, had pushed an infantry post six leagues forward towards Agreda. But as this body was detached from its supports, it had been ordered to fall back on Taragona if the night passed without Ney's scouts appearing.

After Taragona there is no more high road. The way lies entirely over mountain paths covered with stones and splinters of rock. The officer commanding our advanced guard had, therefore, only infantry and a score of hussars of the 2nd (Chamborant) Regiment. He gave me a troop horse and two orderlies, and I went on my way in brilliant moonlight. When we had gone two or three leagues we heard several musket-shots, and bullets whistled close past us. We could not see the marksmen, who were hidden among the rocks. A little farther on we found the corpses of two French infantry soldiers, recently killed. They were entirely stripped, but their shakoes were near them, by the numbers on which I could see that they belonged to one of the regiments in Ney's corps.

We had gone for some hours, when we saw a bivouac fire of the detachment belonging to the advance guard which I had left at Taragona. The sub-lieutenant in command, having no tidings of Ney, was prepared to return to Taragona at daybreak, in pursuance of his orders. He knew that we were barely two leagues from Agreda, but did not know of which side that town was in possession. This was perplexing for me. The infantry detachment would return in a few hours, and if I went back with it, when it might be that in another league I should fall in with Ney's column, I should be giving a poor display of courage, and

laying myself open to reproach from Lannes. On the other hand, if Ney was still a day or two's march away, it was almost certain that I should be murdered by the peasants of the mountains or by fugitive soldiers. What was more, I had to travel alone, for my two brave hussars had orders to return to Taragona when we had found the infantry detachment. No matter; I determined to push on; but then came the difficulty of finding a mount. There was no farm or village in this deserted place where I could procure a horse. That which I was riding was dead lame; and even if the hussars had been able, without incurring severe punishment, to lend me one of theirs, theirs were much fatigued. The horse that had belonged to the officer of chasseurs had received a bullet in the thigh during the fighting. There was only the peasant's mule left. This was a handsome beast, and according to the laws of war belonged to the two hussars, who, no doubt, reckoned on selling her when they got back to the army. Still the good fellows made no demur about lending her to me, and put my saddle on her back. But the infernal beast, more accustomed to the pack than to the saddle, was so restive, that directly I tried to get her away from the group of horses and make her go alone, she fell to kicking, until I had to choose between being sent over a precipice and dismounting.

So I decided to set out on foot. After I had taken farewell of the infantry officer, this excellent young man, M. Tassin by name, came running after me, and said that he could not bear to let me thus expose myself all alone, and that though he had no orders, and his men were raw recruits, with little experience in war, he must send one with me, so that I might at least have a musket and some cartridges in case of an attack. We agreed that I should send the man back with Ney's corps; and I went off, with the soldier accompanying me. He was a slow-speaking Norman, with plenty of slyness under an appearance of good-nature. The Normans are for the most part biave, as I learnt when I commanded the 23rd Chasseurs, where I had five or six hundred of them. Still, in order to know how far I could rely on my follower, I chatted with him as we went along, and asked if he would stand his ground if we were attacked. He said neither yes nor no, but answered, "Well, zur, us shall zee." Whence I inferred that when the moment of danger arrived my new companion was not unlikely to go and see how things were getting on in the rear.

Dawn appeared at last, and I saw the first houses of a large

village. It was Agreda. I was alarmed at finding no outposts, for it showed that not only did no troops of the marshal's occupy the place, but that his army corps must be at least half a day further on. The map showed no village within five or six leagues of Agreda, and it was impossible that the regiments could be quartered in the mountains, far from any inhabited place. So I kept on my guard and before going any farther reconnoitred the position.

Agreda stands in a rather broad valley. It is built at the foot of a lofty hill, deeply escarped on both sides. The southern slope, which reaches the village, is planted with large vineyards. The ridge is rough and rocky, and the northern slope covered with thick coppice, a torrent flowing at the foot. Beyond are seen lofty mountains, uncultivated and uninhabited. The principal street of Agreda runs through the whole length of the place, with narrow lanes leading to the vineyards opening into it. As I entered the village I had these lanes and the vineyards on my right. This detail is important to the understanding of my story.

Everybody was asleep in Agreda; the moment was favourable for going through it. Besides, I had some hope—feeble, it is true—that when I reached the farther end I might perhaps see the fires of Marshal Ney's advance guard. So I went forward, sword in hand, bidding my soldier cock his musket. The main street was covered with a thick bed of damp leaves, which the people placed there to make manure; so that our footsteps made no sound, of which I was glad. I walked in the middle of the street, with the soldier on my right; but, finding himself no doubt in a too conspicuous position, he gradually sheered off to the houses, keeping close to the walls so that he might be less visible in case of an attack, or better placed for reaching one of the lanes which open into the country. This showed me how little I could rely on the man; but I made no remark to him. The day was beginning to break. We passed the whole of the main street without meeting any one. Just as I was congratulating myself on reaching the last houses of the village, I found myself, at twenty-five paces' distance, face to face with four Royal Spanish Carabineers on horseback with drawn swords. Under any other circumstances I might have taken them for French gendarmes, their uniforms being exactly similar, but the gendarmes never march with the extreme advanced guard. These men, therefore, could not belong to Ney's corps, and I at once perceived they were the enemy. In a moment I faced about,

but just as I had turned round to the direction from which I had come I saw a blade flash six inches from my face. I threw my head sharply back, but nevertheless got a severe sabre-cut on the forehead, of which I carry the scar over my left eyebrow to this day. The man who had wounded me was the corporal of the carabineers, who, having left his four troopers outside the village, had according to military practice gone forward to reconnoitre. That I had not met him was probably due to the fact that he had been in some side lane, while I had passed through the main street. He was now coming back through the street to rejoin his troopers, when, seeing me, he had come up noiselessly over a layer of leaves, and was just going to cleave my head from behind, when, by turning round, I presented to him my face and received his blow on my forehead. At the same moment the four carabineers, who seeing that their corporal was all ready for me had not stirred, trotted up to join him, and all five dashed upon me. I ran mechanically towards the houses on the right in order to get my back against a wall; but by good luck I found, two paces off, one of the steep and narrow lanes, which went up to the vineyards. The soldier had already reached it. I flew up there too, with the five carabineers after me; but at any rate they could not attack me all at once, for there was only room for one horse to pass. The brigadier went in front; the other four filed after him. My position, although not as unfavourable as it would have been in the street, where I should have been surrounded, still remained alarming; the blood flowing freely from my wound had in a moment covered my left eye, with which I could not see at all, and I felt that it was coming towards my right eye, so that I was compelled by fear of getting blinded to keep my head bent over the left shoulder so as to bring the blood to that side. I could not staunch it, being obliged to defend myself against the corporal, who was cutting at me heavily. I parried as well as I could, going up backwards all the time. After getting rid of my scabbard and my busby, the weight of which hampered me, not daring to turn my head for fear of losing sight of my adversary, whose sword was crossed with mine, I told the light infantry man, whom I believed to be behind me, to place his musket on my shoulder, and fire at the Spanish corporal. Seeing no barrel, however, I leapt a pace back and turned my head quickly. Lo and behold, there was my scoundrel of a Norman soldier flying up the hill as fast as his legs would carry him. The corporal thereupon attacked with redoubled vigour, and,



seeing that he could not reach me, made his horse rear, so that his feet struck me more than once on the breast. Luckily, as the ground went on rising the horse had no good hold with his hind legs, and every time that he came down again I landed a sword cut on his nose with such effect that the animal presently refused to rear at me any more. Then the brigadier, losing his temper, called out to the trooper behind him, "Take your carbine: I will stoop down, and you can aim at the Frenchman over my shoulders." I saw that this order was my death signal; but as the trooper had to sheathe his sword and unhook his carbine, while all this time the corporal never ceased thrusting at me, leaning right over his horse's neck, I determined on a desperate action, which would be either my salvation or my ruin. Keeping my eye fixed on the Spaniard, and seeing in his that he was on the point of again stooping over his horse to reach me, I did not move until the very instant when he was lowering the upper part of his body towards me; then I took a pace to the right, and leaning quickly over to that side, I avoided my adversary's blow, and plunged half my sword-blade into his left flank. With a fearful yell the corporal fell back on the croup of his horse; he would probably have fallen to the ground if the trooper behind him had not caught him in his arms. My rapid movement in stooping had caused the despatch which I was carrying to fall out of the pocket of my pelisse. I picked it up quickly, and at once hastened to the end of the lane where the vines began. There I turned round and saw the carabineers busy round their wounded corporal, and apparently much embarrassed with him and with their horses in the steep and narrow passage.

This fight took less time than I have taken to relate it. Finding myself rid, at least for the moment, of my enemies, I went through the vines and reached the edge of the hill. Then I considered that it would be impossible for me to accomplish my errand and reach the Emperor at Aranda. I resolved, therefore, to return to Marshal Lannes, regaining first the place where I had left M. Tassin and his picket of infantry. I did not hope to find them still there; but at any rate the army which I had left the day before was in that direction. I looked for my soldier in vain, but I saw something that was of more use to me—a spring of clear water. I halted there a moment, and, tearing off a corner of my shirt, I made a compress which I fastened over my wound with my handkerchief. The blood spurting from my forehead had stained the despatches which I held in my hand, but

I was too much occupied with my awkward position to mind that.

The agitations of the past night, my long walk over the stony paths in boots and spurs, the fight in which I had just been engaged, the pain in my head, and the loss of blood had exhausted my strength. I had taken no food since leaving Tudela, and here I had nothing but water to refresh myself with. I drank long draughts of it, and should have rested longer by the spring had I not perceived three of the Spanish carabineers riding out of Agreda and coming towards me through the vines. If they had been sharp enough to dismount and take off their long boots, they would probably have succeeded in reaching me; but their horses, unable to pass between the vinestocks, ascended the steep and rocky paths with difficulty. Indeed, when they reached the upper end of the vineyards they found themselves brought up by the great rocks, on the top of which I had taken refuge, and unable to climb any farther. Then the troopers, passing along the bottom of the rocks, marched parallel with me a long musket-shot off. They called to me to surrender, saying that as soldiers they would treat me as a prisoner of war, while if the peasants caught me I should infallibly be murdered. This reasoning was sound, and I admit that if I had not been charged with despatches for the Emperor, I was so exhausted that I should perhaps have surrendered.

However, wishing to preserve to the best of my ability the precious charge which had been entrusted to me, I marched on without answering. Then the three troopers, taking their carbines, opened fire upon me. Their bullets struck the rocks at my feet but none touched me, the distance being too great for a correct aim. I was alarmed, not at the fire, but at the notion that the reports would probably attract the peasants who would be going to their work in the morning, and quite expected to be attacked by these fierce mountaineers. My presentiment seemed to be verified, for I perceived some fifteen men half a league away in the valley advancing towards me at a run. They held in their hands something that flashed in the sun. I made no doubt that they were peasants armed with their spades, and that it was the iron of these that shone thus. I gave myself up for lost, and in my despair I was on the point of letting myself slide down over the rocks on the north side of the hill to the torrent, crossing it as best I could, and hiding myself in some chasm of the great mountains which arose on the farther side of the gorge.

Then, if I was not discovered, and if I still had the strength, I should set out when night came in the direction of Taragona.

This plan, though offering many chances of failure, was my last hope. Just as I was about to put it into execution, I perceived that the three carabineers had given up firing on me, and gone forward to reconnoitre the group which I had taken for peasants. At their approach the iron instruments which I had taken for spades or mattocks were lowered, and I had the inexpressible joy of seeing a volley fired at the Spanish carabineers. Instantly turning, they took flight towards Agreda, as it seemed, with two of their number wounded. "The newcomers, then, are French!" I exclaimed. "Here goes to meet them!" and, regaining a little strength from the joy of being delivered, I descended, leaning on my sword. The French had caught sight of me; they climbed the hill, and I found myself in the arms of the brave Lieutenant Tassin.

This providential rescue had come about as follows. The soldier who had deserted me while I was engaged with the carabineers in the streets of Agreda had quickly reached the vines; thence, leaping across the vinestocks, ditches, rocks, and hedges, he had very quickly run the two leagues which lay between him and the place where we had left M. Tassin's picket. The detachment was on the point of starting for Taragona, and was eating its soup, when my Norman came up all out of breath. Not wishing, however, to lose a mouthful, he seated himself by a cooking-pot and began to make a very tranquil breakfast, without saying a word about what had happened at Agreda. By great good luck he was noticed by M. Tassin, who, surprised at seeing him returned, asked him where he had quitted the officer whom he had been told off to escort. "Good Lord, sir," replied the Norman, "I left him in that big village with his head half split open, and fighting with Spanish troopers, and they were cutting away at him with their swords like anything." At these words Lieutenant Tassin ordered his detachment to arms, picked the fifteen most active, and went off at the double towards Agreda. The little troop had gone a league when they heard shots, and inferred from them that I was still alive but in urgent need of succour. Stimulated by the hope of saving me, the brave fellows doubled their pace, and finally perceived me on the ridge of the hill, serving as a mark for three Spanish troopers.

M. Tassin and his men were tired, and I was at the end of my strength. We halted, therefore, for a little, and meanwhile

you may imagine that I expressed my warmest gratitude to the lieutenant and his men, who were almost as glad as I was. We returned to the bivouac where M. Tassin had left the rest of his people. The *cantinière* of the company was there with her mule carrying two skins of wine, bread, and ham. I bought the lot and gave them to the soldiers, and we breakfasted, as I was very glad to do, the two hussars whom I had left there the night before sharing in the meal. One of these mounted the monk's mule and lent me his horse, and so we set out for Taragona. I was in horrible pain, because the blood had hardened over my wound. At Taragona I rejoined Lannes' advance guard; the general in command had my wound dressed, and gave me a horse and an escort of two hussars. I reached Tudela at midnight, and was at once received by the marshal, who, though ill himself, seemed much touched by my misfortune. It was necessary, however, that the despatch about the battle of Tudela should be promptly forwarded to the Emperor, who must be impatiently awaiting news from the army on the Ebro. Enlightened by what had befallen me in the mountains, the marshal consented that the officer bearing it should go by Moranda and Burgos, where the presence of French troops on the roads made the way perfectly safe. I should have liked very much to be the bearer, but I was in such pain and so tired that it would have been physically impossible for me to ride hard. The marshal therefore entrusted the duty to his brother-in-law, Major Guéhéneuc. I handed him the despatches stained with my blood. Major Saint-Mars, the secretary, wished to re-copy them and change the envelope. "No, no," cried the marshal, "the Emperor ought to see how valiantly Captain Marbot has defended them." So he sent off the packet just as it was, adding a note to explain the reason of the delay, eulogizing me, and asking for a reward to Lieutenant Tassin and his men, who had hastened so zealously to my succour, without reckoning the danger to which they might have been exposed if the enemy had been in force.

The Emperor did, as a matter of fact, a little while after, grant the Cross both to M. Tassin and to his sergeant, and a gratuity of 100 francs to each of the men who had accompanied them. As for the Norman soldier, he was tried by court martial for deserting his post in the presence of the enemy, and condemned to drag a shot for two years, and to finish his time of service in a pioneer company.

## CHAPTER XVIII

*LANNES ADVANCED* to Saragossa ; but, having no siege artillery, he was content for the moment to guard the principal approaches, and, leaving Marshal Moncey in command, went to rejoin the Emperor. Being, as I have said, ill, he was obliged to travel in a carriage, relays being furnished by the draught-horses of the army. I anticipated a disagreeable journey ; for though we should halt at night, seven or eight hours' riding would increase the pain of my wound, already severe.

But the marshal kindly gave me a place in his carriage, together with his friends Generals Pouzet and Frère. They were fond of chatting, and at times of joking at the expense of their friends, and as they had only known me a short time my presence embarrassed them. But the marshal said, "He is a good lad ; you can talk before him," and they took advantage freely of his opinion. Although we rested at night, I found the journey very fatiguing. We passed Logroño, Miranda, and Burgos, and went on foot up the celebrated gorge of Somo Sierra, which had been carried a few days before, under the Emperor's eyes, by the Polish lancers of his guard.

When Lannes had examined the position we descended to Buirago, and the next day reached Madrid, which had been occupied by Napoleon only after serious fighting. Lannes presented me to him, and he received me kindly, promising to reward me ere long for my conduct at Agüeda. We found M. Guéhéneuc at Madrid in the uniform of a colonel, having been promoted by the Emperor on delivering the despatch stained with my blood. Guéhéneuc was a good fellow ; he came to me and said, "You had the danger, and got the sword-cut, and I have got the step ; but I hope that your promotion will not be slow in coming." I hoped so too ; but I will frankly admit that I was a little annoyed with the marshal for the obstinacy with which he had insisted on making me go by Agüeda.

We had been barely a week at Madrid when the Emperor learnt, on December 21, that the Portuguese army was daring to march against the Spanish capital, and was only at a few days' distance. Orders were instantly given to march, and he left the town at the head of several army corps, going towards Valladolid, from which direction the English, under Sir John Moore, were expected. Marshal Lannes, being quite recovered, was to

accompany the Emperor on horseback. He suggested to me that I should stay at Madrid till my wound was completely healed; but there were two reasons against this. In the first place, I wished to be present at the battle with the English; and secondly, I knew that the Emperor scarcely ever promoted people in their absence, and I was anxious to obtain the promised step to major, so I got ready to start. The only thing that troubled me was that by reason of my wound I could wear neither cocked hat nor busby. The handkerchief bound round my head was not quite a sufficiently military head-gear to appear among a staff closely attached to that of the Emperor. The sight of a Mameluke of the guard with his turban and red fez gave me an idea. I had a cap of the same colour; round this I wound a smart silk handkerchief, and placed the whole over my bandages.

We marched the first night to the foot of the Guadarrama. There was a sharp frost, and the ice on the roads caused the troops—the cavalry especially—to march with difficulty. Next day a furious snowstorm, with a fierce wind, made the passage of the mountains almost impracticable. Men and horses were hurled over precipices. The leading battalions had actually begun to retreat; but Napoleon was resolved to overtake the English at all costs. He spoke to the men, and ordered that the members of each section should hold one another by the arm. The cavalry, dismounting, did the same. The staff was formed in similar fashion, the Emperor between Jannes and Duroc, we following with locked arms; and so, in spite of wind, snow and ice, we proceeded, though it took us four hours to reach the top. Half-way up the marshals and generals, who wore jackboots, could go no further. Napoleon, therefore, got hoisted on to a gun, and bestrode it; the marshals and generals did the same; and in this grotesque order they reached the convent at the summit. There the troops were rested, and wine served out. The descent, though awkward, was better. At nightfall we reached the market town of San Ralael, and obtained food and quarters there and in the villages round. My wound had reopened, the snow had got down my neck, and I was wet through: so I passed a wretched night enough.

As we continued our march on the following days we came into milder weather. Rain took the place of frost, and the roads became quagmires. At Tordesillas we came up with some stragglers of the English army, which at our approach was retreating towards the port of Corunna. Anxious to catch it

before it could embark, the Emperor forced on the troops, making them do ten or twelve leagues a day. This haste was the cause of a check which Napoleon felt all the more from the fact that it was inflicted on a division of his guard.

When the army was at Villapanda, where it passed the night, the Emperor—who by this time was furious at the protracted pursuit of the English—heard that their rear-guard was only a few leagues from us, at the town of Benavente, beyond the little stream of the Esla. At daybreak he sent forward a column of infantry, with cavalry of the guard, under the command of General Lefebvre-Desnouettes, a brave but somewhat imprudent officer. On reaching with his cavalry the banks of the Esla, the general could see no enemy, and proposed to reconnoitre the town of Benavente, half a league beyond the stream. This was all right; but a picket would have sufficed, for twenty-five men can see as far as two thousand, and if they fall into an ambush the loss is less serious. General Desnouettes should, therefore, have awaited his infantry before plunging recklessly into the Esla. But without listening to any suggestion, he made the whole regiment of chasseurs ford the river, and advanced towards the town, which he ordered the Mamelukes to search. They found not a soul in the place, a pretty certain sign that the enemy was preparing an ambush. The French general ought in prudence to have drawn back, since he was not in sufficient force to fight a strong rear-guard. Instead of this, Desnouettes pushed steadily forward; but as he was going through the town, four thousand or five thousand English cavalry\* turned it, covered by the houses in the suburbs, and suddenly charged down upon the chasseurs. These, hastening from the town, made so valiant a defence that they cut a great gap through the English, regained the stream, and recrossed without much loss. But when, on reaching the left bank, the regiment re-formed, it was seen that General Desnouettes was no longer present. A messenger came with a flag of truce announcing that the general's horse had been killed in the fight, and he himself was a prisoner of war.

At this moment the Emperor came up. Imagine his wiath at hearing that, not only had his favourite regiment undergone a repulse, but that the commander had remained in the hands of the English! Though much displeased with Desnouettes'

\* [The total number of cavalry fit for duty in Moore's army was 2,278.]

imprudence, he proposed to the commander on the other side to exchange him against an officer of the same rank among those detained in France ; but General Moore was too proud of being able to show to the English people one of the commanders of the imperial guard of France to agree to this exchange, and, consequently, declined it. General Desnouettes was treated with much kindness, but was sent to London as a trophy, which made Napoleon all the more angry.

In spite of this little victory, the English continued their retreat. We crossed the Esla, and occupied Benavente. From this town to Astorga the distance is not less than fifteen or sixteen leagues, with several streams to be crossed ; but the Emperor was in such a hurry to overtake the enemy that he required his army to march this distance in one day, though it was the 31st of December and the days were very short. Seldom have I made such a fatiguing march. An icy rain wetted us to the skin ; men and horses sank into the marshy ground. We only advanced with the utmost effort ; and as all the bridges had been broken by the English, our men were five or six times compelled to strip, place their arms and clothes on their heads, and go naked through the icy water of the streams.

It is painful to relate that I saw three veteran grenadiers of the guard, unable to march any further, and, unwilling to fall to the rear at the risk of being tortured and massacred by the peasants, blow out their brains with their own muskets. A dark and rainy night added to the fatigue of the troops ; the exhausted soldiers lay down in the mud. A great number halted at the village of Bañeza ; only the leading companies arrived at Astorga, the rest remaining on the road. It was late at night when the Emperor and Lannes, escorted only by their staffs and some hundred cavalry, entered Astorga.

New Year's Day 1809 was passed at Astorga. The weather continued bad, and it was necessary to allow the army to come together. Food was plentiful, and as there was not an inhabitant in the place we were all the freer to make the most of it. The suicide of the three grenadiers had affected the Emperor keenly ; and in spite of rain and wind he visited all the men's quarters, talking to them and restoring their *moral*. All were awaiting the order to start next day 'n pursuit of the English, when an aide-de-camp from the Minister of War arrived bringing despatches which decided Napoleon to go no further in person. Doubtless it was the news of the hostile movements which Austria was



beginning to make, in order to attack the French Empire while Napoleon and a part of the Grand Army were far away in Spain. The Emperor then resolved to return to France to prepare for this new war with the Austrians; but not wishing to lose the chance of chastising the English, he ordered Ney and Soult to pursue. They set out, their troops marching past the Emperor.

The English troops are excellent; but as they are only raised by voluntary enlistment, and as this becomes difficult in time of war, they are forced to admit married men, who are allowed to be accompanied by their families. Consequently the regiments took along with them a great number of women and children; a serious disadvantage which Great Britain has never been able to remedy. Thus, just as the corps of Soult and Ney were marching past the Emperor outside Astorga, cries were heard from a great barn. The door was opened, and it was found to contain 1,000 to 1,200 English women and children, who, exhausted by the long march of the previous days through rain, mud, and streams, were unable to keep up with the army and had taken refuge in this place. For forty-eight hours they had lived on raw barley. Most of the women and children were good-looking, in spite of the muddy rags in which they were clad. They flocked round the Emperor, who was touched by their misery, and gave them lodging and food in the town, sending a flag of truce to let the English general know that when the weather permitted they would be sent back to him.

While Soult was pursuing the retreating enemy towards Corunna, the Emperor, accompanied by Marshal Lannes, went back to Valladolid to get on the road to France. He stayed two days in that town, ordering Lannes to go and take command of the two corps that were besieging Saragossa, and after taking that place to rejoin him at Paris. But before leaving us, the Emperor, wishing to show his satisfaction with Lannes' staff, invited the marshal to hand in a scheme of recommendations for promotion with regard to his officers. I was entered for the rank of major and quite expected to get it, especially when I heard that the marshal on leaving the Emperor's study had asked for me. But my hopes were cruelly overthrown. The marshal said to me kindly that when he was asking for a step for me, he thought he ought also to recommend his old friend Captain Dagusan, but that the Emperor had begged him to choose between Dagusan and me. "I cannot make up my mind," said the marshal, "for the wound which you received at Agreda and

your behaviour in that difficult business put the right on your side ; but Dagusan is old, and is making his last campaign. Still I would not commit an injustice for the world, and I leave to you to settle which of the two names I shall have entered in the commission which the Emperor is about to sign." It was an embarrassing position for me ; my heart was very full. However, I answered that he must put M. Dagusan's name on the commission. The marshal embraced me with tears in his eyes, promising that after the siege of Saragossa I should certainly get my step. That evening the marshal called his officers together to announce the promotions. Guéhéneuc had his colonelcy confirmed, Saint-Mars was appointed lieutenant-colonel, Dagus, major, D'Albuquerque and Watteville got the Legion of Honour, De Viry and Labédoyère were captains ; I got nothing.

Next day we left Valladolid, riding by short stages to Saragossa. Lannes took the command of the whole besieging force to the number of 30,000 men, who were under the orders of Marshal Mortier, Junot replacing Moncey.

In spite of all attacks Saragossa still held out. In vain did the marshal, touched by the heroism of the defence, send a flag of truce to propose a capitulation. It was refused, and the siege continued. The huge fortified convents could not be destroyed like the houses, by mining ; we, therefore, merely blew up a piece of their thick walls, and when the breach was made sent forward a column to the assault. The besieged would flock to the defence and in the terrible fighting which resulted from the attack we suffered our principal losses.

The best fortified convents were those of the Inquisition and of Santa Engracia. A mine had just been completed under the latter when the marshal, sending for me in the middle of the night, told me that in order to hasten my promotion to the rank of major he designed for me a most important duty. "At daybreak," said he, "the mine which is to breach the wall of Santa Engracia will be fired. Eight companies of grenadiers are to assault ; I have given orders that the captains should be chosen from those junior to you ; I give you the command of the column. Carry the convent, and I feel certain that one of the first messengers from Paris will bring your commission as major." I accepted with gratitude, though suffering at that moment a good deal from my wound. The flesh in cicatrizing had formed a lump which prevented me from wearing military head-gear, so Dr. Assalagny, the surgeon-major of the chasseur

had reduced it with lunar caustic. This painful operation had been performed the day before ; I had been feverish all night, and consequently was not in very good condition for leading an assault. No matter, there was no room for hesitation, and I can admit, too, that I was exceedingly proud of the command entrusted to me. Eight companies of grenadiers to a mere captain was magnificent.

I hastened to get ready, and as day dawned I went to the trenches. There I found General Rasout, who, after having handed over the command of the grenadiers to me, observed that, as the mine could not be fired for an hour, I should do well to use this time in examining the wall which was to be blown up, and in calculating the width of the resulting breach so as to arrange my attack. I started, with an adjutant of engineers to show me the way, through the ruins of a whole quarter which had already been thrown down. In one of the corners of the court, whence a pump had been torn away, some stones had fallen out, and left a gap. The sentry showed me that by stooping down one could see through this opening the legs of a storming force of the enemy posted in the convent garden. In order to verify his statement and notice the lie of the ground on which I was going to fight, I stooped down. At that moment a Spaniard posted on the tower of Santa Engracia fired a shot at me, and I fell on the stones.

I felt no pain at first, and thought that the adjutant standing by me had inadvertently given me a push. Presently, however, the blood flowed copiously ; I had got a bullet in the left side very near the heart. The adjutant helped me to rise, and we went into the cellar where the soldiers were. I was losing so much blood that I was on the point of fainting. There were no stretchers, so the soldiers passed a musket under my arms, another under my knees, and thus carried me through the thousand-and-one passages which had been made through the debris of this quarter to the place where I had left General Rasout. There I recovered my senses. The general wished to have me attended to, but I preferred to be under Dr. Assalagny, so, pressing my handkerchief on the wound, I had myself taken to Marshal Lannes' head-quarters, a cannon-shot from the town.

When they saw me arrive, all covered with blood, carried by soldiers, one of whom was supporting my head, the marshal and my comrades thought I was dead. Dr. Assalagny assured them to the contrary, and hastened to dress my wound. The difficulty

was where to put me, for, as all the furniture of the establishment had been burnt during the siege, there was not a bed in the place. We used to sleep on the bricks wherewith the rooms were paved. The marshal and all my comrades at once gave their cloaks : these were piled up, and I was laid on them. The doctor examined my wound, and found that I had been struck by a projectile which must have been flat because it had passed between two ribs without breaking them, which an ordinary bullet would not have done. To find the object Assalagny put a probe into the wound, but when he found nothing his face grew anxious. Finding that I complained of severe pain in the loins, he turned me on my face, and examined my back. Hardly had he touched the spot where the ribs are connected with the spine than I involuntarily gave a cry. The projectile was there. Assalagny then took a knife, made a large incision, perceived the metallic body showing between two ribs and tried to extract it with the forceps. He did not, however, succeed, though his violent efforts lifted me up, until he made one of my comrades sit on my shoulders, and another on my legs. At length he succeeded in extracting a lead bullet of the largest calibre. The Spaniards had hammered it flat till it had the shape of a half-crown, a cross was scratched on each face, and small notches all round gave it the appearance of the wheel of a watch. It was these teeth which had caught in the muscles, and rendered the extraction so difficult. Thus crushed out, the ball presented too large a surface to enter a musket and must have been fired from a blunderbus. Striking edgewise, it had acted like a cutting instrument, passed between two ribs, and travelled round the interior of the chest to make its exit in the same way as its entry, fortunately preserving sufficient force to make its way through the muscles of the back. The marshal, wishing to let the Emperor know with what fanatical determination the inhabitants of Saragossa were defending themselves, sent him the bullet extracted from my body. Napoleon, after examining it, had it brought to my mother, at the same time announcing to her that I was about to be promoted to major.

Assalagny was one of the first surgeons of the day, and, thanks to him, my wound, which might have been mortal, was a case of rapid cure. At the end of a fortnight my vigorous constitution got the upper hand, and I was able to leave my bed.

The climate being mild, I was also able to take short walks, leaning on the arm of Dr. Assalagny or my friend, De Viry ; but their duties did not allow of their staying with me long,

and I suffered much from ennui. One day my servant came in to say that an old hussar, with tears streaming down his face, was asking to see me. As you will guess, it was my old tutor, Sergeant Pertelay. His regiment had just come to Spain, and hearing that I had been wounded, he came straight to me. I was glad to see the good man again, and gave him a cordial greeting. After this he often came to visit me, and divert me by his interminable yarns and the quaint advice which he still thought himself entitled to give me. My convalescence did not last long, and by March 15 I was nearly well, though weak.

On March 20 the French carried a nunnery by assault. Besides the nuns, they found three hundred women of all classes who had taken refuge in the church. They were treated with respect, and brought to the marshal. The poor creatures, having been surrounded for several days, had received no food, and were famishing. Lannes led them himself to the camp market, where, summoning the carabinieri, he ordered them to bring food for the women, making himself responsible for payment. Nor did his generosity stop there; he had them all taken back to Saragossa. On their return the inhabitants, who had followed their movements from roofs and towers, rushed forward to hear their adventures. They all spoke well of the French marshal and soldiers, and from that moment the excitement subsided and a surrender was decided upon. That evening Saragossa capitulated.

When a place capitulates it is usual for the officers to retain their swords. This practice was followed at Saragossa, except in the case of the governor, Palafox, touching whom the marshal had received special instructions from the Emperor, on the following grounds:

Count Palafox, a devoted friend of Ferdinand, had followed him to Bayonne. Thrown into consternation by the abdication of that prince and his father, the Spanish grandees summoned by Napoleon to a national assembly, finding themselves in France and in Napoleon's power, for the most part recognized Joseph as their king. Palafox, it appears, under the same pressure, did the same; but hardly had he returned to Spain before he promptly protested against the moral violence which, he asserted, had been used towards him, and hastened to put himself at the head of the insurgents at Saragossa. The Emperor regarded this conduct as perfidious, and ordered that, when the town was taken, Count Palafox should be treated, not as a prisoner of war, but as a state prisoner, and accordingly disarmed and sent to

prison at Vincennes. Marshal Lannes, therefore, found himself under the necessity of sending an officer to arrest the governor and demand his sword. Count Palafox remained in France till 1814. The garrison, 40,000 in number, were forwarded to France as prisoners of war, but two-thirds of them escaped and recommenced the slaughter of Frenchmen as members of guerilla bands. They had carried away the germs of typhus, and died later. The ruined streets of the city were a perfect charnel-house, and the contagion spread to the French troops who formed the new garrison.

## CHAPTER XIX

*WITH THE* capture of Saragossa, Marshal Lannes' work was done, and he started to rejoin the Emperor at Paris and accompany him into Germany. We rode the distance from Aragon to Bidassoa. The celebrated guerilla Mina attacked our escort in the Pyrenees near Pampeluna, and a servant of the marshal's who acted as outrider was killed. At Saint-Jean de Luz the marshal found his carriage and offered places in it to Saint-Mars, Le Couteulx, and myself. I sold my horses, and De Viry took my servant back. One of the marshal's valets having vainly tried to act as outrider, and there being no postilions, we three offered to do three stages apiece. I admit that this riding post cost me a good deal, hardly healed as I was of my two wounds, but I reckoned on my youth and my strong constitution. I began my duties on the darkest of nights and under a violent storm, and besides, as I was not preceded by a postilion as the outrider who carries despatches usually is, I got into bad places, and rode my horse into holes; the carriage was at my heels, I did not know the position of the post-houses, which are hard to find at night and in such weather. To finish my misfortunes, I had to wait for some time for the ferry-boat across the Adour at Peyrehorade. I took cold and was shivering, and in a good deal of pain from my wound when I took my place in the carriage. You may see from these details that an aide-de-camp's life is not all rosewater. We stayed forty-eight hours at Lectoure, where the marshal had a comfortable house in the buildings of the old bishop's palace. Then we continued our journey towards Paris. As the marshal travelled night and day and could not bear the smell of cooked

food, we were obliged to fast pretty well for six stages and then only to eat as we galloped.

We continued our journey, with the cold always increasing, which made the way from Orleans to Paris wretched enough. I arrived on April 2, terribly tired and in much pain. The joy with which I met my mother again was mingled with bitterness, for she had just heard that my brother had been taken prisoner by Spanish guerillas, and I was about to start on a new campaign.

The moment I got to Paris the marshal took me to the minister of war to find out what he had done for me. My commission as major lacked only the Emperor's signature, but Napoleon, being much occupied with the movements of the Austrian army, did not ask the minister for the document, which was all ready, and made no promotion. An evil fate pursued me.

The capital was much excited. The English, seeing us occupied in Spain, thought that the moment had come to raise the whole North of Europe against Napoleon. The plan was premature, for the Emperor still could dispose of vast influence and a strong force in Germany. Prussia did not dare to stir; the Princes of the Germanic Confederation placed their armies at the service of Napoleon; even Russia sent a corps of 25,000 men. In spite of this, the Austrians in the pay of England had just declared war, and their armies were advancing on our ally, Bavaria. The Emperor was making ready to go to Germany, whither Lannes was to follow him. All the carriages had been reserved by the hundreds of generals and others, and I was in a difficulty, for both the Emperor and the marshal were to leave Paris on April 13, and I had orders to start a day before them. I had therefore to make up my mind to ride post once more. Luckily, a week's rest had reduced the irritation of the wound in my side. That in my forehead was healed over, and I was careful to wear a cocked hat instead of my heavy busby. My servant, Woirland, went with me, but being a very bad rider, he often fell off, only saying, as he got up again, "How tough you are! Oh, yes; you are tough!"

In forty-eight hours I covered the hundred and twenty leagues between Paris and Strasburg, in spite of rain and snow. Woirland could do no more; we had to change our mode of travelling. Besides, I knew that in Germany nobody posted on horseback, and we were still only half-way to Augsburg, our rendezvous. At last I found a carriage, and reached Augsburg, where I joined my comrades. The Emperor, the marshal, and nearly all the

troops were already in the field. I managed to buy a horse in the town. I exchanged my carriage for another mount, and we set off in the saddle. In the course of a few weeks we had sold our horses cheap, and spent a great deal of money—all to go and meet the bullets which were to take away many of our lives. You may call the feeling which urged us love of glory, or perhaps madness ; it was an imperious master, and we marched without looking back.

We reached head-quarters on April 20, during the action at Abensberg.

Crossing the Iser, the French army marched on Eckmuhl, where the bulk of the Austrian army was massed. The Emperor and Marshal Lannes passed the night at Landshut ; a battle on the following day appeared imminent. The town and neighbourhood were full of troops. In every direction staff officers were carrying orders and returning. My comrades and I were fully occupied, and as we only had very second-rate horses, picked up anyhow, and they were pretty thoroughly tired, we foresaw that it would be difficult for us to perform our duties satisfactorily in the battle of the morrow.

When I came in about ten o'clock, on returning from an errand three or four leagues from Landshut, Marshal Lannes gave me an order to carry to General Gudin. His division being a long way off, I was to remain with him till the marshal arrived in the field. This was embarrassing, for the horse which I had been riding was knocked up, the marshal had not one to lend me, and there was no French cavalry at Landshut which might be required to supply me with one. I could not go to the Emperor's quarters to tell the marshal that I was practically horseless, yet without a good steed how was I to carry an order on which perhaps the safety of the army depended ? I got out of the difficulty by what I admit was a wicked act, but perhaps excusable in the circumstances. You shall decide. I called my servant, Woirland, a practised "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles," who had served his apprenticeship in Humbert's Black Legion, and was never at a loss. I imparted my difficulty to him, and bade him procure me a horse at any price ; I simply must have one. "You shall have it," said he, and leaving the town he made for the camp of the Wurtemberg cavalry. The men were all asleep, sentries and all ; Woirland inspected the horses at his ease, saw one that he liked, unfastened it, and, at the risk of getting knocked on the head if anyone saw him, he brought it out of the camp, turned



everything off its back, came back to the town, put my saddle on it, and informed me that it was all ready. Now the horses of the Wurtemberg cavalry are marked on the near thigh with a pair of stag's horns, so I could easily recognize whence the new mount, which my Figaro had brought me, was procured. He did not deny it; the horse, to put it plainly, had been stolen. But see how a difficult situation stretches the conscience! To silence mine, I said to myself: "If I do not take this animal, which belongs to the King of Wurtemberg, it is impossible for me to bear to General Gudin the orders which he has got to execute at daybreak. This may involve the loss of a battle, and cost the King of Wurtemberg his crown. Therefore, in making use of a horse from his army I am indirectly doing him a service. Besides, as the Emperor gave him a kingdom, he may very well lend the Emperor a horse, which I shall return when I have made use of it to their joint advantage." Whether this reasoning would satisfy a casuist I know not, but matters were pressing; I leapt into the saddle and galloped off. Master Woiland knew his business, it was an excellent horse. The only thing which disturbed me was that the infernal pair of horns stamped on its thigh, showing whence it came, exposed me to the chance of having it claimed by some Wurtemberg officer. Finally, at daybreak, I reached General Gudin, just as his troops were marching. I went with him until the Emperor and Marshal Lannes overtook us with the main body. The battle was fought, victory was never for a moment in doubt. Marshal Davout distinguished himself, earning the title which was given him later on of Prince of Eckmühl.

My horse behaved splendidly, but his last day had come. In the hottest of the action, Marshal Lannes sent one of his least experienced aides-de-camp to General Saint-Sulpice with orders to charge with his cuirassiers a brigade of the enemy's cavalry. The aide-de-camp explained matters so badly that the general was going off in quite a different direction, and the marshal perceiving this told me to place myself at the head of the division, and to guide it towards the enemy by the high road which runs through the village of Eckmühl. While Lannes was explaining his wishes to me, studying a map which he, I, and General Cervoni were holding each by one side, a cannon-ball came across it, and threw General Cervoni stone dead against the marshal's shoulder. He was covered with the blood of his friend, who had come from Corsica only the day before on purpose

to make this campaign. Deeply grieved as he was, he continued to give me his orders with perfect clearness, and I hastened to General Saint-Sulpice, and rode beside him at the head of the cuirassiers towards Eckmühl.

The village was occupied by a regiment of Croats, who, instead of firing upon us out of the windows where they were out of reach of our sabres, bravely but stupidly left their excellent position, and came down into the street, intending to form close column, and stop our squadrons with their bayonets. The French cuirassiers gave them no time for this ; they came up so quickly that the Croats, caught in disarray just as they were coming out of the houses, were driven in and sabred, and soon the street was piled with their bodies. They did not, however, yield without a valiant defence. One battalion especially made a vigorous resistance, and my horse having received in the scuffle the point of a bayonet in his heart went forward a few steps, and fell dead against a corner stone in such wise that one of my legs was caught under the poor animal's body, and my knee pressed against the stone, so that I was quite unable to move. Woe to the dismounted horseman in such cases ! No one stops to pick him up, nor, indeed, could he if he would ; so the first regiment of our cuirassiers, after cutting down all the Croats who did not lay down their arms promptly, continued the charge, and passed through the village followed by the whole division at a gallop.

Horses, unless very tired, seldom set their feet on the body of a man lying on the ground. Thus the whole division of cuirassiers passed over me without doing the slightest injury. Still, I could not free myself, and my situation became more unpleasant when I foresaw that our cuirassiers would be repulsed and driven back through the village by a very strong force of the enemy's cavalry, which I had seen before the charge on the further side of Eckmühl. I was afraid that the Austrian troopers would serve me out by way of revenging the Croats. During the moment of quiet which succeeded the uproar of the street fighting and the passage of cavalry, I perceived at no great distance two grenadiers of the enemy's who had laid aside their pieces, and were helping their wounded comrades to rise. I beckoned them to come to me and assist me in getting my leg free ; whether from good nature or from fear that I might have them killed, although at that moment I had no Frenchmen at my orders, they obeyed. They knew that our cuirassiers were in front, and probably regarded themselves as prisoners ; anyhow, these kind of soldiers

do not reflect much. They came up, and I admit that when I saw one of them pull from his pocket a knife to cut the leather of the stirrup which held my foot under the horse, I was afraid that the fancy might seize him of sticking it, as he might quite safely have done, into me. But he was honest, and with the help of his comrade succeeded in setting me on my feet. I made them take my saddle and bridle, and left Eckmühl to rejoin our infantry, which was still outside.

The two Croats followed me in the most docile manner, and it was lucky for them they did, for hardly were we out of the village when a fearful noise arose behind us. It was caused by the return of our squadrons, who, as I expected, were driven back by the enemy's superior force, and these in their turn were sabring all who lagged behind.

Our cuirassiers, furious at their repulse, tried as they galloped past me to run through the Croats who were carrying my saddle. The men had helped me; I objected, therefore, to their being killed, and ordered them by signs to lie down in a ditch, where the sabres could not reach them. I should have put myself there if I had not observed at the head of the Austrian force some Uhlans, who could easily have reached me with their lances. Luckily for us, help came to Saint-Sulpice's division before it had gone 300 or 400 paces, for, seeing it in retreat, the Emperor sent forward two divisions of cavalry which were rapidly hastening to meet us. But short as was the distance which I had to traverse to escape the Austrian lances, it was a long way for a dismounted man. Two cuirassiers took me between them, and each giving me a hand carried me along so well that with the help of long strides, I could keep up for a couple of minutes with their galloping horses. This was all that mattered, the supports came up promptly, the enemy stayed their pursuit and were even driven back beyond Eckmühl, which our troops reoccupied. I was glad to be at the end of my more than double-quick march, for I was out of breath, and could not have kept it up.

Hoping to recover my saddle and bridle, I returned to the ditch, where I had made the two Croats hide, and found them quietly lying there. Several charges had taken place across their line without their receiving the least scratch. I rewarded them, and marched them in front of me to the hillock, where the Emperor and Marshal Lannes were, knowing well that my chief would not wish to lose my services during the rest of the battle, and would make one of the regiments which were near

him lend me a horse. He gave orders accordingly, but as at the moment there were none but cuirassiers in the neighbourhood, they brought me an immense heavy animal, quite unfit to carry an aide-de-camp rapidly from point to point. The marshal having remarked this, a colonel of Wurtemberg Light Horse, who happened to be behind the Emperor, eager to do a polite thing, bade his orderly dismount; and there I was again on an excellent horse, marked with the stag's horns. The colonel's kindness renewed in some measure my remorse for the crime I had committed in the morning, but I silenced it by repeating my somewhat Jesuitical arguments. The joke of the thing was that, as I was bearing an order to the reserve, I fell in with my servant, Woirland, who, coming up to give me some provisions out of his always well-filled saddle-bags, exclaimed, "Why, that horse is the devil! He was grey this morning, and now he's black!"

## CHAPTER XX

*THE ARCHDUKE* had made use of the darkness to reach Ratisbon, where the bridge enabled him to transport his baggage and the greater part of his army to the left bank of the Danube. Then we were able to perceive the extent of the Emperor's foresight in having at the outset of the campaign ordered Davout—coming up from Hamburg and Hanover, with a view of joining the Grand Army on the right bank of the Danube—to secure possession of Ratisbon and his bridge by leaving a regiment there.

The Emperor could not, however, march on to Vienna until Ratisbon was retaken, otherwise, as soon as he had moved forward, the archduke would have crossed the Danube by the bridge, and, bringing his army back to the right bank, would have attacked us in rear. We had then, at all costs to take possession of the place. Marshal Lannes was charged with this difficult duty. The enemy had 6,000 men in Ratisbon, whom they could reinforce to any extent by help of the bridge; many guns were in position on the ramparts, and the parapet was garnished with infantry.

The Emperor, having dismounted, took up his position on a hillock a short cannon-shot from the town. Having noticed near the Straubing gate a house which had imprudently been built against the rampart, he sent forward some twelve-pounders

and howitzers, ordering them to concentrate their fire upon this house, so that its ruins, falling into the ditch, might partially fill it, and form at the foot of the wall an incline by which our troops might mount to the assault. While the artillery was executing this order, Lannes brought Morand's division close up to the promenade which goes round the town ; and, in order to shelter his troops from the enemy's fire, up to the last moment he placed them in rear of a large stone store-house, which appeared to have been placed there on purpose to aid our undertaking. Carts laden with ladders taken from the neighbouring villages were brought up to this point, where perfect protection was obtained against the Austrian projectiles. While waiting till everything was ready, Marshal Lannes had gone back to the Emperor to receive his final orders. As they were chatting, a bullet—fired, in all probability, from one of the long-range Tyrolese rifles—struck Napoleon on the right ankle. The pain was at first so sharp that the Emperor had to lean upon Lannes, but Dr. Larrey, who quickly arrived, declared that the wound was trifling. If it had been severe enough to require an operation, the event would certainly have been considered a great misfortune for France ; yet it might perhaps have spared her many calamities. However, the report that the Emperor had been wounded spread through the army. Officers and men ran up from all sides ; in a moment Napoleon was surrounded by thousands of men, in spite of the fire which the enemy's guns concentrated on the vast group. The Emperor, wishing to withdraw his troops from this useless danger, and to calm the anxiety of the more distant corps, who were getting unsteady in their desire to come and see what was the matter, mounted his horse the instant his wound was dressed, and rode down the front of the whole line, amid loud cheers.

It was at this extempore review held in presence of the enemy that Napoleon first granted gratuities to private soldiers, appointing them knights of the Empire and members, at the same time, of the Legion of Honour. The regimental commanders recommended, but the Emperor also allowed soldiers who thought they had claims to come and represent them before him ; then he decided upon them by himself. Now it befell that an old grenadier who had made the campaigns of Italy and Egypt, not hearing his name called, came up, and, in a calm tone of voice, asked for the Cross. " But," said Napoleon, " what have you done to deserve it ? " " It was I, sir, who, in the desert of Joppa, when it was so terribly hot, gave you a water-melon."

"I thank you for it again ; but the gift of the fruit is hardly worth the Cross of the Legion of Honour." Then the grenadier, who up till then had been as cool as ice, working himself up into a frenzy, shouted, with the utmost volubility, "Well, and don't you reckon seven wounds received at the bridge of Arcola, at Lodi and Castiglione, at the Pyramids, at Acre, Austerlitz, Friedland ; eleven campaigns in Italy, Egypt, Austria, Prussia, Poland——" but the Emperor cut him short, laughing, and mimicking his excited manner, cried : "There, there—how you work yourself up when you come to the essential point ! That is where you ought to have begun ; it is worth much more than your melon. I make you a knight of the Empire, with a pension of 1,200 francs. Does that satisfy you ?" "But, your Majesty, I prefer the Cross." "You have both one and the other, since I make you knight." "Well, I would rather have the Cross." The worthy grenadier could not be moved from that point, and it took all manner of trouble to make him understand that the title of knight of the Empire carried with it the Legion of Honour. He was not appeased on this point until the Emperor had fastened the decoration on his breast, and he seemed to think a great deal more of this than of his annuity of 1,200 francs. It was by familiarities of this kind that the Emperor made the soldiers adore him, but it was a means that was only available to a commander whom frequent victories had made illustrious ; any other general would have injured his reputation by it.

As soon as Lannes gave notice that all was ready for the assault, we returned towards Ratisbon, the Emperor meanwhile going back to his hillock to witness the operations. The various army corps round him awaited events in silence. Our artillery had completely destroyed the house by the rampart, and its fragments falling into the ditch had made a slope practicable enough, but not reaching higher than to ten or twelve feet from the top of the wall ; to reach this therefore, ladders had to be placed on the rubbish no less than to descend into the ditch. On reaching the building, behind which Morand's division were taking shelter from the fire, Lannes called for fifty volunteers to go forward and plant the ladders. Many more than that number came forward, and the number had to be reduced. The brave fellows, led by picked officers, set out with admirable spirit ; but they were hardly clear of the building when they met the hail of bullets, and were nearly all laid low. A few only continued to descend into the ditch, where the guns soon disabled them, and the

remains of this first column fell back, streaming with blood, to the place where the division was sheltered. Nevertheless, at the call of Lannes and Morand, fifty more volunteers appeared, and, seizing the ladders, made for the ditch. No sooner, however, did they show themselves than a still hotter fire nearly annihilated them. Cooled by these two repulses, the troops made no response to the marshal's third call for volunteers. If he had ordered one or more companies to march, they would, no doubt, have obeyed ; but he knew well what a difference there is in point of effect between obedience on the soldiers' part and *dash* ; and for the present danger volunteers were much better than troops obeying orders. Vainly, however, did the marshal renew his appeal to the bravest of a brave division, vainly did he call upon them to observe that the eyes of the Emperor and all the Grand Army were on them. A gloomy silence was the only reply, the men being convinced that to pass beyond the walls of the building into the enemy's fire was certain death. At length Lannes, exclaiming, " Well, I will let you see that I was a grenadier before I was a marshal, and still am one," seized a ladder, lifted it, and would have carried it towards the breach. His aides-de-camp tried to stop him ; he resisted, and got angry with us. I ventured to say, "*Monsieur le Maréchal*, you would not wish us to be disgraced, and that we should be if you were to receive the slightest wound in carrying that ladder to the ramparts as long as one of your aides-de-camp was left alive " 'Then, in spite of his efforts, I dragged the end of the ladder from him, and put it on my shoulder while De Viry took the other end, and our comrades by pairs took up other ladders

At the sight of a marshal disputing with his aides-de-camp for the lead of the assault, a shout of enthusiasm went up from the whole division. Officers and soldiers wished to lead the column, and in their eagerness for this honour they pushed my comrades and me about, trying to get hold of the ladders. It, however, we had given them up, we should seem to have been playing a comedy to stimulate the troops. The wine had been drawn, and we had to drink it, bitter as it might be. Understanding this, the marshal let us have our way, though fully expecting to see the greater part of his staff exterminated as they marched at the head of this perilous attack.

I have said already that my comrades, although as brave as possible, lacked experience, and more especially what is called military tact. I made, therefore, no demur about taking the

command of the little column. The matter was important enough to warrant it, and no one contested my right. Behind the building I organized the detachment which was to follow us. The destruction of the two former columns I ascribed to the imprudence with which their leaders had massed together the soldiers composing them. This arrangement was unsuitable in two ways. First, it gave the enemy the advantage of firing upon a mass instead of upon isolated men, and secondly, our grenadiers, who were laden with ladders, having formed a single group and getting in each other's way, had not been able to move fast enough to get quickly clear of the Austrian fire. I settled, therefore, that De Viry and I, carrying the first ladder, should start off at a run ; that the second ladder should follow at twenty paces distant, and the rest in due course ; that when we reached the promenade the ladders should be placed five feet apart to avoid confusion ; that when we descended into the ditch we should leave every second ladder against the wall towards the promenade so that the troops might follow without delay ; that the others should be lifted and carried quickly to the breach, where we should place them only a foot apart, both on account of the want of space and in order that we might reach the top of the rampart close together and push back the besieged when they tried to throw us down. This plan having been expounded and comprehended, the marshal, who approved it, cried, "Off with you, my boys, and Ratisbon is taken." At the word, De Viry and I darted out, crossed the promenade at a run, and, lowering our ladder, descended into the ditch. Our comrades followed with fifty grenadiers. In vain did the cannon thunder, the musketry rattle, grapeshot and bullets strike trees and walls. It is very difficult to take aim at isolated individuals moving very fast and twenty paces apart, and we got into the ditch without one man of our little column being wounded. The ladders already indicated were lifted, we carried them to the top of the rubbish from the ruined house, and placing them against the parapet, we ran up them to the rampart. I was first up one of the first ladders, Labédoyère, who was climbing the one beside me, feeling that the lower end of it was not very steadily placed on the rubbish, asked me to give him my hand to steady him, and so we both reached the top of the rampart in full view of the Emperor and the whole army, who saluted us with a mighty cheer. It was one of the finest days of my life. De Viry and D'Albuquerque joined us in a moment with the other aides-de-camp and fifty grenadiers, and by this time a



regiment of Morand's division was coming towards the ditch at the double.

As I said, the attack took place close to the Straubing gate. Marshal Lannes had ordered me to get it opened or break it down, so that he could enter the town with Morand's division. Accordingly, as soon as I saw my fifty grenadiers on the ramparts, and the head of the supporting regiment already arrived in the ditch, where their passage was secured by a further supply of ladders, I went down into the town without further delay, every moment being precious. We marched steadily towards the Straubing gate, only a hundred paces from the breach, and great was my surprise to find an Austrian battalion massed under the immense archway, all the men facing towards the gate, so as to be ready to defend it if the French broke it in. The major in command, thinking only of the duty which was entrusted to him, and taking no heed of the noise which he heard on the ramparts close by, was so confident that the French attack would fail that he had not even placed a sentry outside the archway to let him know what was going on, so he was thunderstruck at seeing us come up in his rear.

He had taken up his position behind his men so that having faced about on seeing us approach, he found himself fronting the little French column, the strength of which he was quite unable to judge, for I had formed it in two squads, which rested on the sides of the arch and closed it completely. It was lucky that our adversaries could not tell the weakness of our force, and I hastened to tell the major that as the town had been taken by assault and occupied by our troops, nothing remained for him but to lay down his arms under pain of being put to the sword.

The assured tone in which I spoke intimidated the officer; all the more so that he could hear the tumult produced by the successive arrival of our soldiers who had followed us over the breach, and hastened to form in front of the archway. He harangued his battalion, and, after having explained the situation to them, ordered them to lay down their arms. The companies who were close to our muzzles obeyed, but those who were at the other end of the archway, close to the gate and sheltered from our shot, fell to shouting, refused to surrender, and pushed forward the mass of the battalion till we were nearly upset. The officers, however, succeeded in quieting them, and everything seemed in a fair way to be settled, when the impetuous Labédoyère, impatient at the delay, lost his temper, and was on the point of ruining

the whole thing ; for, seizing the Austrian major by the throat, he was just about to run him through if the rest had not turned his sword aside. The other side then resumed their arms, and a bloody battle was about to take place, when the gate began to resound on the outside under the powerful blows which the axes of the pioneers of Morand's division, led by Marshal Lannes in person, were delivering upon it. Then the enemy, understanding that they would be between two fires, surrendered, and we made them march disarmed from under the archway towards the town. The gate thus cleared, we opened it to the marshal, whose troops rushed into the place like a torrent.

After complimenting us, the marshal gave me the order to march towards the bridge, in order to cut off such of the enemy's regiments as were in Ratisbon, and prevent the archduke from sending reinforcements.

As the town belonged to our ally, the King of Bavaria, it might have been expected that the inhabitants would be sufficiently devoted to our cause to point out the way to the bridge, but they were too frightened to come out, and we did not see one. All the doors and windows were shut and we were in too great a hurry to drive them in, for at every cross-road appeared groups of Austrians who retreated firing. The only retreat open to the enemy was across the bridge, and I thought that I might get there by following them, but there was so little concerted action among the Austrians that most of the squads of sharpshooters who were posted in front of us took flight at our approach in different directions. As I was thus lost in the labyrinth of unknown streets, with no idea of the direction that the column should take, suddenly a door opened, and a young woman, pale and with wild eyes, came flying towards us, crying, "I am French, save me!" It was a Parisian milliner in business at Ratisbon, who fearing that, as a Frenchwoman, she might be ill-treated by the Austrians, had, as soon as she heard the sound of French voices, come to throw herself headlong into the arms of her compatriots. At sight of her a bright idea flashed into my mind. "Do you know where the bridge is?" said I. "Certainly" "Show us the way, then." "Great Heavens! In the middle of this shooting? I am frightened to death already, and was going to ask you to let me have some soldiers to defend my house. I am going back this moment." "Very sorry, but you will show us the bridge before you go back. Two men take the lady's arms, and march her along at the head of the column." This was done in spite

of the tears and cries of our fair compatriot. At every turning I asked her which direction we must take. The nearer we got to the Danube, the more skirmishers we met; the bullets whistled round the frightened milliner's ears, but, not being familiar with the sound, she was much less alarmed at the faint whistle than at the reports of the muskets. But suddenly one of the grenadiers who was supporting her got a bullet through his arm, the blood spurted on to her, her knees gave way, and we had to carry her. What had befallen her neighbour made me more cautious for her, so I put her in rear of the first section, so as to be in some measure sheltered from bullets by the men. At last we reached a little square facing the bridge. The enemy, who held the further end of it, as well as the suburb on the right bank named Stadt-am-Hof, no sooner caught sight of the column than they opened artillery fire. I thought it was useless to expose the lady from Paris any longer, and let her go free. But as the poor woman, who was more dead than alive, knew not where to take shelter, I advised her to enter a little chapel of Our Lady at the further end of the square. She agreed, the grenadiers lifted her over the little grating which closed the entry, and she hastened to get out of reach of shot, crouching down behind the statue of the Virgin, where, I can assure you, she made herself pretty small.

The same day the Emperor entered Ratisbon, and ordered the troops who had not fought to assist the inhabitants in getting the fire under, still a great many houses were burnt. After having visited and rewarded the wounded, the glorious remains of the two first columns who had failed in their attempt, Napoleon wished also to see the third column, which had carried Ratisbon under his eyes. He testified his satisfaction, and decorated several. On the marshal reminding him of my old and new claims to the rank of major, Napoleon replied, "You may consider the thing done." Then turning to Berthier, "Make me sign his commission the first time you bring up any papers." I could only congratulate myself, I could not reasonably expect the Emperor to suspend his important work that I might have my commission a few days earlier. Indeed, I was almost beside myself at the marks of satisfaction which the Emperor and the marshal had shown towards me, and at the praises which my comrades and I received on all hands.

As you may suppose, before leaving the neighbourhood of the bridge, I had the Paris lady fetched from the chapel and taken to her house by an officer. The marshal, seeing the soldiers

helping her to recross the grating, asked me how she got there. I told him the story, which he passed on to the Emperor, who laughed a good deal, and said that he should like to see the lady.

Leaving a strong garrison in Ratisbon, the Emperor marched on Vienna by the right bank of the Danube, while the enemy followed the left bank in the same direction. After crossing the Traun, burning the bridge at Mauthhausen, and passing the Enns, the army advanced to Molk, without knowing what had become of General Hiller. Some spies assured us that the archduke had crossed the Danube and joined him, and that we should on the morrow meet the whole Austrian army, strongly posted in front of Saint-Polten. In that case, we must make ready to fight a great battle; but if it were otherwise, we had to march quickly on Vienna in order to get there before the enemy could reach it by the other bank. For want of positive information the Emperor was very undecided. The question to be solved was, Had General Hiller crossed the Danube, or was he still in front of us, masked by a swarm of light cavalry, which, always flying, never let us get near enough to take a prisoner from whom one might get some enlightenment?

Still knowing nothing for certain, we reached, on May 7, the pretty little town of Molk, standing on the bank of the Danube, and overhung by an immense rock, on the summit of which rises a Benedictine convent, said to be the finest and richest in Christendom. From the rooms of the monastery, a wide view is obtained over both banks of the Danube. There the Emperor and many marshals, including Lannes, took up their quarters, while our staff lodged with the parish priest. That night, as my comrades and I, delighted at being sheltered from the bad weather, were having a merry supper with the parson, a jolly fellow, who gave us an excellent meal, the aide-de-camp on duty with the marshal came to tell me that I was wanted, and must go up to the convent that moment.

All the passages and lower rooms of the monastery were full of soldiers, forgetting the fatigues of the previous days in the monks' good wine. On reaching the dwelling-rooms, I saw that I had been sent for about some serious matter, for generals, chamberlains, orderly officers, said to me repeatedly, "The Emperor has sent for you." Some added, "It is probably to give you your commission as major." This I did not believe, for I did not think I was yet of sufficient importance to the sovereign for him to send for me at such an hour to give me my commission with

his own hands. I was shown into a vast and handsome gallery, with a balcony looking over the Danube; there I found the Emperor at dinner with several marshals and the abbot of the convent, who has the title of bishop. On seeing me, the Emperor left the table, and went towards the balcony, followed by Lannes. I heard him say in a low tone, "The execution of this plan is almost impossible; it would be sending a brave officer for no purpose to almost certain death." "He will go, sir," replied the marshal; "I am certain he will go, at any rate we can but propose it to him." Then, taking me by the hand, the marshal opened the window of the balcony over the Danube. The river at this moment, trebled in volume by the strong flood, was nearly a league wide; it was lashed by a fierce wind, and we could hear the waves roaring. It was pitch dark, and the rain fell in torrents, but we could see on the other side a long line of bivouac fires. Napoleon, Marshal Lannes, and I, being alone on the balcony, the marshal said, "On the other side of the river, you see an Austrian camp. Now, the Emperor is keenly desirous to know whether General Hiller's corps is there, or still on this bank. In order to make sure, he wants a stout-hearted man, bold enough to cross the Danube, and bring away some soldier of the enemy's, and I have assured him that you will go." Then Napoleon said to me, "Take notice that I am not giving you an order; I am only expressing a wish. I am aware that the enterprise is as dangerous as it can be, and you can decline it without any fear of displeasing me. Go, and think it over for a few moments in the next room, come back and tell us frankly your decision."

I admit that when I heard Marshal Lannes' proposal I had broken out all over in a cold sweat; but at the same moment, a feeling, which I cannot define, but in which a love of glory and of my country was mingled, perhaps, with a noble pride, raised my ardour to the highest point, and I said to myself, "The Emperor has here an army of 150,000 devoted warriors, besides 25,000 men of his guard, all selected from the bravest. He is surrounded with aides-de-camp and orderly officers, and yet when an expedition is on foot, requiring intelligence no less than boldness, it is I whom the Emperor and Marshal Lannes choose." "I will go, sir!" I cried without hesitation. "I will go; and if I perish, I leave my mother to your Majesty's care." The Emperor pulled my ear to mark his satisfaction; the marshal shook my hand, exclaiming, "I was quite right to tell your Majesty that he would go. 'There's what you may call a brave soldier."

My expedition being thus decided on, I had to think about the means of executing it. The Emperor called General Bertrand, his aide-de-camp, General Dorsenne, of the guard, and the commandant of the imperial head-quarters, and ordered them to put at my disposal whatever I might require. At my request an infantry picket went into the town to find the burgomaster, the syndic of the boatmen, and five of his best hands. A corporal and five grenadiers of the old guard who could all speak German, and had still to earn their decorations, were also summoned, and voluntarily agreed to go with me. The Emperor had them brought in first, and promised that on their return they should receive the Cross at once. The brave men replied by a "Vive l'Empereur!" and went to get ready. As for the five boatmen, on its being explained to them through the interpreter that they had to take a boat across the Danube, they fell on their knees and began to weep. The syndic declared that they might just as well be shot at once, as sent to certain death. The Emperor was inflexible, and the grenadiers received orders to take the poor men, whether they would or not, and we went down to the town.

The corporal who had been assigned to me was an intelligent man. Taking him for my interpreter, I charged him as we went along to tell the syndic of the boatmen that as he had got to come along with us, he had better in his own interest show us his best boat, and point out everything that we should require for her fitting. The poor man obeyed; so we got an excellent vessel, and we took all that we wanted from the others. We had two anchors, but as I did not think we should be able to make use of them, I had sewn to the end of each cable a piece of canvas with a large stone wrapped in it. I had seen in the south of France the fishermen use an apparatus of this kind to hold their boats by throwing the cord over the willows at the water's edge. I put on a cap, the grenadiers took their forage caps, we had provisions, ropes, axes, saws, a ladder—everything, in short, which I could think of to take.

I had bidden the grenadiers follow in silence all the orders of the syndic who was steering; the current was too strong for us to cross over straight from Molk: we went up, therefore, along the bank under sail for more than a league, and although the wind and the waves made the boat jump, this part was accomplished without accident. But when the time came to take to our oars and row out from the land, the mast, on being lowered, fell over to one side, and the sail, dragging in the water, offered a strong

resistance to the current and nearly capsized us. The master ordered the ropes to be cut and the masts to be sent overboard : but the boatmen, losing their heads, began to pray without stirring. Then the corporal, drawing his sword, said, " You can pray and work too ; obey at once, or I will kill you." Compelled to choose between possible and certain death, the poor fellows took up their hatchets, and with the help of the grenadiers, the mast was promptly cut away and sent floating. It was high time, for hardly were we free from this dangerous burden when we felt a fearful shock. A pine-stem borne down by the stream had struck the boat. We all shuddered, but luckily the planks were not driven in this time. Would the boat, however, resist more shocks of this kind ? We could not see the stems, and only knew that they were near by the heavier tumble of the waves. Several touched us, but no serious accident resulted. Meantime the current bore us along, and as our oars could make very little way against it to give us the necessary slant, I feared for a moment that it would sweep us below the enemy's camp, and that my expedition would fail. By dint of hard rowing, however, we had got three-quarters of the way over, when I saw an immense black mass looming over the water. Then a sharp scratching was heard, branches caught us in the face, and the boat stopped. To our questions the owner replied that we were on an island covered with willows and poplars, of which the flood had nearly reached the top. We had to grope about with our hatchets to clear a passage through the branches, and when we had succeeded in passing the obstacle, we found the stream much less furious than in the middle of the river, and finally reached the left bank in front of the Austrian camp. This shore was bordered with very thick trees, which, overhanging the bank like a dome, made the approach difficult no doubt, but at the same time concealed our boat from the camp. The whole shore was lighted up by the bivouac fires, while we remained in the shadow thrown by the branches of the willows. I let the boat float downwards, looking for a suitable landing-place. Presently I perceived that a sloping path had been made down the bank by the enemy to allow the men and horses to get to the water. The corporal adroitly threw into the willows one of the stones that I had made ready, the cord caught in a tree, and the boat brought up against the land a foot or two from the slope. It must have been just about midnight. The Austrians, having the swollen Danube between them and the French, felt

themselves so secure that except the sentries the whole camp was asleep.

It is usual in war for the guns and the sentinels always to face towards the enemy, however far off he may be. A battery placed in advance of the camp was therefore turned towards the river, and sentries were walking on the top of the bank. The trees prevented them from seeing the extreme edge, while from the boat I could see through the branches a great part of the bivouac. So far my mission had been more successful than I had ventured to hope, but in order to make the success complete I had to bring away a prisoner, and to execute such an operation fifty paces away from several thousand enemies, whom a single cry would rouse, seemed very difficult. Still, I had to do something. I made the five sailors lie down at the bottom of the boat under guard of two grenadiers, another grenadier I posted at the bow of the boat, which was close to the bank, and myself disembarked, sword in hand, followed by the corporal and two grenadiers. The boat was a few feet from dry land, we had to walk in the water, but at last we were on the slope. We went up, and I was making ready to rush on the nearest sentry, disarm him, gag him, and drag him off to the boat, when the ring of metal and the sound of singing in a low voice fell on my ears. A man, carrying a great tin pail, was coming to draw water, humming a song as he went : we quickly went down again to the river to hide under the branches, and as the Austrian stooped to fill his pail my grenadiers seized him by the throat, put a handkerchief full of wet sand over his mouth, and placing their sword-points against his body threatened him with death if he resisted or uttered a sound. Utterly bewildered, the man obeyed, and let us take him to the boat ; we hoisted him into the hands of the grenadiers posted there, who made him lie down beside the sailors. While this Austrian was lying captured, I saw by his clothes that he was not strictly speaking a soldier, but an officer's servant. I should have preferred to catch a combatant, who could have given me more precise information ; but I was going to content myself with this capture for want of a better, when I saw at the top of the slope two soldiers carrying a cauldron between them, on a pole. They were only a few paces off. It was impossible for us to re-embark without being seen. I therefore signed to my grenadiers to hide themselves again, and as soon as the two Austrians stooped to fill their vessel powerful arms seized them from behind, and plunged their heads under water. We had to



stupefy them a little, since they had their swords, and I feared that they might resist. Then they were picked up in turn, their mouths covered with a handkerchief full of sand, and sword-points against their breasts constrained them to follow us. They were shipped as the servant had been, and my men and I got on board again.

So far all had gone well. I made the sailors get up and take their oars, and ordered the corporal to cast loose the rope which held us to the bank. It was, however, so wet, and the knot had been drawn so tight by the force of the stream, that it was impossible to unfasten. We had to saw the rope, which took us some minutes. Meanwhile, the rope, shaking with our efforts imparted its movement to the branches of the willow round which it was wrapped, and the rustling became loud enough to attract the notice of the sentry. He drew near, unable to see the boat, but perceiving that the agitation of the branches increased, he called out, "Who goes there?" No answer. Further challenge from the sentry. We held our tongues, and worked away. I was in deadly fear; after facing so many dangers, it would have been too cruel if we were wrecked in sight of port. At last, the rope was cut and the boat pushed off. But hardly was it clear of the overhanging willows than the light of the bivouac fires made it visible to the sentry, who, shouting, "To arms," fired at us. No one was hit, but at the sound the whole camp was astir in a moment, and the gunners, whose pieces were ready loaded and trained on the river, honoured my boat with some cannon-shots. At the report my heart leapt for joy, for I knew that the Emperor and marshal would hear it. I turned my eyes toward the convent with its lighted windows, of which I had, in spite of the distance, never lost sight. Probably all were open at this moment, but in one only could I perceive any increase of brilliancy; it was the great balcony window, which was as large as the doorway of a church, and sent from afar a flood of light over the stream. Evidently it had just been opened at the thunder of the cannon, and I said to myself, "The Emperor and the marshals are doubtless on the balcony; they know that I have reached the enemy's camp, and are making vows for my safe return." This thought raised my courage, and I heeded the cannon-balls not a bit. Indeed, they were not very dangerous, for the stream swept us along at such a pace that the gunners could not aim with any accuracy, and we must have been very unlucky to get hit. One shot would have done for us, but all fell harmless into the Danube.

Soon I was out of range, and could reckon a successful issue to my enterprise. Still, all danger was not yet at an end. We had still to cross among the floating pine-stems, and more than once we struck on submerged islands, and were delayed by the branches of the poplars. At last we reached the right bank, more than two leagues below Molk, and were able to make our way back to where we had started from.

As we went along, the corporal, at my orders, questioned the three Austrians, and I learnt with satisfaction that the camp whence I had brought them away belonged to the very division, General Hiller's, the position of which the Emperor was so anxious to learn. There was, therefore, no further doubt that that general had joined the archduke on the other side of the Danube. There was no longer any question of a battle on the road which we held, and Napoleon, having only the enemy's cavalry in front of him, could in perfect safety push his troops forward towards Vienna, from which we were but three easy marches distant. With this information I galloped forward, in order to bring it to the Emperor with the least possible delay.

When I reached the gate of the monastery, it was broad day. I found the approach blocked by the whole population of the little town of Molk, and heard among the crowd the cries of the wives, children, and friends of the sailors whom I had carried off. In a moment I was surrounded by them, and was able to calm their anxiety by saying, in shocking bad German, "Your friends are alive, and you will see them in a few moments." A great cry of joy went up from the crowd, bringing out the officer in command of the guard at the gate. On seeing me he ran off in pursuance of orders to warn the aides-de-camp to let the Emperor know of my return. In an instant the whole palace was up. The good Marshal Lannes came to me, embraced me cordially, and carried me straight off to the Emperor, crying out, "Here he is, sir; I knew he would come back. He has brought three prisoners from General Hiller's division." Napoleon received me warmly, and though I was wet and muddy all over, he laid his hand on my shoulder, and did not forget to give his greatest sign of satisfaction by pinching my ear. I leave you to imagine how I was questioned! The Emperor wanted to know every incident of the adventure in detail, and when I had finished my story said, "I am very well pleased with you, 'Major' Marbot." These words were equivalent to a commission, and my joy was full. At that moment, a chamberlain announced that breakfast

was served, and as I was calculating on having to wait in the gallery until the Emperor had finished, he pointed with his finger towards the dining-room, and said, "You will breakfast with me." As this honour had never been paid to any officer of my rank, I was the more flattered. During breakfast I learnt that the Emperor and the marshal had not been to bed all night, and that when they heard the cannon on the opposite bank they had all rushed on to the balcony. The Emperor made me tell again the way in which I had surprised the three prisoners, and laughed much at the fright and surprise which they must have felt.

At last, the arrival of the wagons was announced, but they had much difficulty in making their way through the crowd, so eager were the people to see the boatmen. Napoleon, thinking this very natural, gave orders to open the gates, and let everybody come into the court. Soon after, the grenadiers, the boatmen, and the prisoners were led into the gallery. The Emperor, through his interpreter, first questioned the three Austrian soldiers, and learning with satisfaction that not only General Hiller's corps, but the whole of the archduke's army were on the other bank, he told Berthier to give the order for the troops to march at once on Saint-Polten. Then, calling up the corporal and the five soldiers, he fastened the Cross on their breast, appointed them knights of the Empire, and gave them an annuity of 1,200 francs apiece. All the veterans wept for joy. Next came the boatmen's turn. The Emperor told them that, as the danger they had run was a good deal more than he had expected, it was only fair that he should increase their reward; so, instead of the 6,000 francs promised, 12,000 in gold were given to them on the spot. Nothing could express their delight; they kissed the hands of the Emperor and all present, crying, "Now we are rich!" Napoleon laughingly asked the syndic if he would go the same journey for the same price the next night. But the man answered that, having escaped by miracle what seemed certain death, he would not undertake such a journey again even if his lordship, the abbot of Molk, would give him the monastery and all its possessions. The boatmen withdrew, blessing the generosity of the French Emperor, and the grenadiers, eager to show off their decoration before their comrades, were about to go off with their three prisoners, when Napoleon perceived that the Austrian servant was weeping bitterly. He reassured him as to his safety but the poor lad replied, sobbing, that he knew the French treated their prisoners well, but that, as he had on him a belt,

containing nearly all his captain's money, he was afraid that the officer would accuse him of deserting in order to rob him, and he was heart-broken at the thought. Touched by the worthy fellow's distress, the Emperor told him that he was free, and as soon as we were before Vienna, he would be passed through the outposts, and be able to return to his master. Then, taking a rouleau of 1,000 francs, he put it in the man's hand, saying, "One must honour goodness wherever it is shown." Lastly, the Emperor gave some pieces of gold to each of the other two prisoners, and ordered that they too should be sent back to the Austrian outposts, so that they might forget the fright which we had caused them, and that it might not be said that any soldiers, even enemies, had spoken to the Emperor of the French without receiving some benefit.

On leaving the gallery I found the ante-room filled with generals and officers of the guard. My comrades were there also, and all congratulated me, both on the success of my expedition, and on the step which the Emperor had granted to me by addressing me as "major." It was not, however, till next month that I got my commission, by which time I had another wound to show for it. Do not, however, accuse the Emperor of ingratitude; during May his time was taken up by the events of the war, and as he always gave me the title of major he would naturally think that I considered myself as such.

As we moved from Molk to Saint-Polten, the Emperor and Marshal Lannes put many further questions to me as to the doings of that night.

That night the Emperor and the marshal slept at Saint-Polten; two days more brought us to Vienna, which we reached very early on May 10. The Emperor made his way at once to the royal palace at Schonbrunn, thus being at the gates of the Austrian capital twenty-seven days after leaving Paris. We had thought that the Archduke Charles would have hastened his march on the left bank, and crossed the river by the bridge of Spitz, so as to reach Vienna before us; but he was several days behind, and only a feeble garrison defended the capital. The city proper of Vienna is very small, but is surrounded by immense suburbs, which are enclosed by a single wall too weak to stop an army. The Archduke Maximilian, who commanded in Vienna, abandoned the suburbs, therefore, and withdrew with all the combatants behind the old fortifications of the town. If he had chosen to make use of the assistance offered by the courageous population,

he might have held out for some time, but he did not do so, and on their arrival the French troops occupied the suburbs without striking a blow. Marshal Lannes, deceived by an incorrect report, and thinking that the enemy had also abandoned the city, sent Colonel Guéhéneuc in a hurry to tell the Emperor that we occupied Vienna, and Napoleon, eager to announce this great news, ordered M. Guéhéneuc to set out at once for Paris. But the place still held out, and when Lannes tried to enter at the head of a division, we were received with cannon-shots. General Tharreau was wounded and several soldiers killed. The marshal withdrew the troops into the suburbs, and decided to send Colonel Saint-Mars with a summons to the governor. He was accompanied by M. de la Grange, who, having been for a long time attached to the French embassy at Vienna, knew his way perfectly. A flag of truce ought to go forward alone, accompanied by a trumpeter ; but instead of acting according to this custom, Colonel Saint-Mars took three orderlies, and M. de la Grange the same number, so that with the trumpeter there were nine of them, which was far too many. The enemy thought, or pretended to think, that they were coming to inspect the fortifications rather than to bring a summons to surrender. A gate suddenly opened, and there came out a squad of Hungarian hussars, who charged sword in hand upon the party, wounded them all severely, and carried them prisoners into the town.

On hearing of the unworthy manner in which the Austrians had shed the blood of the party sent with the flag of truce, the Emperor came up indignantly, and sent for a great number of howitzers to bombard Vienna in the night. The defenders, meanwhile, had opened a terrible fire on the suburbs, and kept it up for twenty-four hours at the risk of killing their fellow-citizens.

On the morning of the 11th, the Emperor went round the outskirts of Vienna, and noticing that the Archduke Maximilian had committed the serious mistake of not lining the Prater with troops, he resolved to take possession of it by throwing a bridge over the small arm of the Danube. By ten o'clock in the evening our gunners, covered by the solid buildings of the imperial stables, began to throw shells into the town, which soon was on fire in several quarters, and notably in the Graben.

Our shells continued to pour upon the town till midnight, when Napoleon, leaving the task of directing the fire to the artillery generals, started with Marshal Lannes to return to Schönbrunn. It was bright moonlight, and, the road being good,

the Emperor set off as usual at a gallop. He was riding for the first time a handsome horse presented to him by the King of Bavaria. His equerry, M. de Canisy, among whose duties was that of trying the Emperor's horses, had doubtless neglected this precaution, but affirmed that the horse was perfect. After a few paces the horse fell; the Emperor rolled off and lay at full length without giving a sign of life. We thought he was dead, but he had only fainted. He was quickly picked up, and in spite of all that Marshal Lannes could say, insisted on riding the rest of the way. He took another mount, and started again at a gallop. On reaching the great court of the palace, he made all the staff and the squadron of his guard who had witnessed the accident draw up in a circle round him, and forbade anyone to speak of it. The secret, though entrusted to more than two hundred persons, half of whom were common troopers, was so religiously kept that the army and Europe never knew that Napoleon had nearly lost his life. The equerry, Count de Canisy, expected a severe reprimand, but Napoleon only punished him by ordering him to ride the Bavarian horse every day, and after the next day, when he had been off several times owing to the weakness of the animal's legs, the Emperor pardoned him, bidding him only examine better in future horses which he gave him to ride.

Finding his retreat threatened, and the capital in danger of being burnt to the ground, the archduke evacuated Vienna in the night and retired behind the main branch of the Danube, destroying the Spitz bridge. It was by this very bridge that the French army crossed the Danube in 1805, when, as I have related, Marshals Lannes and Murat got possession of it by a trick. After the departure of the troops, the populace were beginning to pillage the town, and the authorities sent General O'Reilly and the archbishop, with some of the principal officials, to ask for aid from Napoleon. Upon this, several regiments entered as protectors rather than as conquerors. The citizens were disarmed, with the exception of the civic guard, who showed themselves as worthy of this mark of confidence as they were in 1805.

Marshal Lannes' head-quarters were in the magnificent palace of Prince Albert of Sachs-Teschen near the Karthner Thor. Prince Murat had occupied this during the Austerlitz campaign, but the marshal did not stay there, preferring to be lodged in a private house at Schonbrunn, where he could more readily

communicate with the Emperor. In Vienna we found MM. Saint-Mars and de la Grange, with their escort all severely wounded. The marshal had M. Saint-Mars taken to Prince Albert's palace.

## CHAPTER XXI

*NAPOLÉON NOW* concentrated the bulk of his forces around Vienna. Less fortunate, however, than in 1805, he found the Spitz bridge broken, and could not finish the war, nor reach his enemy, without passing the mighty stream of the Danube. At this period of spring, the melting snow swells the stream till it becomes immense, and each of its branches is equal to a large river. The crossing consequently presented many difficulties, but as the stream flows among a great number of islands, some of which are very spacious, points can be found there on which to support bridges. After inspecting the bank closely, both above and below Vienna, the Emperor observed two spots favourable for the passage. The first by the isle of Schwarzelaken, opposite Nussdorf, half a league above Vienna; the second, the same distance below the town, opposite the village of Kaiserbersdorf, and crossing the great island of Lobau. Napoleon had both bridges set to work upon at once in order to distract the attention of the enemy. The first was entrusted to Lannes, the other to Masséna.

Marshal Lannes ordered General Saint-Hilaire to send 500 men to the island of Schwarzelaken, which is separated from the left bank by a small arm of the river, and almost reaches the end of the Spitz bridge. General Saint-Hilaire composed this force of men from two regiments under two majors, which was likely to interfere with combined action. Thus, on reaching the island these officers, not acting in concert, committed the great mistake of having no reserve in a large house well placed for protecting the landing of more troops. Then dashing on blindly without organization, they pursued some detachments of the enemy who were defending the island. These shortly received reinforcements from the left bank, and though our soldiers repulsed the first attacks with vigour, forming square and fighting with the bayonet, they were overwhelmed by numbers, more than half being killed and all the rest wounded and taken before support could reach them. The Emperor and Marshal Lannes arrived on the river-bank just in time to witness this disaster.

In despair at having caused the deaths of so many brave men the Emperor and Marshal Lannes were hastening along the bank in a state of great agitation, when the marshal, catching his foot in a rope, fell into the Danube. Napoleon, who was alone with him at the moment, dashed into the water up to his waist, and had got the marshal out when we ran up to his assistance. This accident did not improve their tempers, already tried by the check which we had received, and which compelled the idea of a passage by the Schwarzelaken island to be given up. Having ascertained our purpose, the enemy had occupied it with several thousand men. Ebersdorf was now the only point at which we could cross the Danube.

Finding, when he arrived opposite Vienna, that Napoleon was checked by the river, the Archduke Charles hoped to prevent his crossing it by threatening his rear. He attacked our forces at Linz, and at Krems made arrangements to cross the river with all his army. But his troops were everywhere repulsed, and he confined himself to resisting our passage opposite Ebersdorf. Many obstacles were in the way of our building the bridges; we had to use boats of different shapes and dimensions, and materials lacking the necessary strength; we had no anchors, and had to supply their place with boxes full of cannon-balls. The works were carried on under cover of the plantations, and protected by Masséna's division.

Lannes' division, posted over against Nussdorf, was to make apparent preparations for a crossing, in order to distract the enemy's attention. But this demonstration was merely a feint, and the marshal himself accompanied the Emperor on the 19th, when he went to Ebersdorf to direct the establishment of the bridges. After examining everything most thoroughly, and ascertaining that everything had been procured that was possible under the circumstances, Napoleon caused a brigade of Molitor's division to cross to the island of Lobau in eighty large boats and ten rafts. The breadth of the river and its roughness made this difficult, but once on the island the troops met with no obstacle; the enemy, preoccupied with the idea that we meant to cross above Vienna, having omitted to guard that point.

On the evening of May 20, the Emperor and Marshal Lannes being lodged in the only house which existed on the island, my comrades and I took up our quarters close by, in brilliant moonlight, on beautiful turf. It was a delicious night, and with the carelessness of soldiers, thinking nothing of the morrow's dangers,



re chatted gaily, and sang the last new airs—among others, two which were then very popular in the army, being attributed to Queen Hortense.

Captain d'Albuquerque was the most joyous of us all, and after charming us with his fine voice, he sent us into fits of laughter by relating the most comical adventures of his adventurous life. Poor fellow! he little thought that the next day's sun would be his last—as little as we guessed that the plain which lay over against us on the other bank was soon to be watered with the blood of our kind marshal, and with that of almost every one of us.

On the morning of the 21st the Austrian lines showed themselves, and took up their position facing ours in front of Essling and Aspern. Marshal Masséna ought to have loopholed the houses of these villages, and covered the approaches by field-works, but unluckily he had neglected to take this precaution. The Emperor found fault with him, but as the enemy was approaching, and there was no time to repair the omission, Napoleon did his best to supply it by covering the last bridge with a *tête de pont*, such he traced himself. If Marshal Lannes' corps, the imperial guard, and the other expected troops had been present, Napoleon would certainly not have given the archduke time to deploy, but would have attacked him on the spot. Having, however, only three divisions of infantry and four of cavalry to oppose to the enemy's large force, he was constrained, for the moment, to go on the defensive. To this end he rested his left wing, consisting of three divisions of infantry under Masséna, on the village of Aspern. The right wing, formed by Boudet's division, rested on the Danube, near the great wood lying between the river and the village of Essling, and occupied that village also. Lastly, the three cavalry divisions, and part of the artillery, under the orders of Marshal Bessières, formed the centre, spreading over the space which remained empty between Essling and Aspern. Although the troops composing the right and centre did not form any part of Lannes' corps, the Emperor wished in this difficulty to make use of the marshal's talents, and had entrusted the command-in-chief of them to him. He was heard to say to Marshal Bessières, much, as it appeared, to Bessières' annoyance, "You are under the orders of Marshal Lannes." I shall relate exactly the serious quarrel to which this declaration gave rise, and how, greatly against my will, I got mixed up in it.

About 2 p.m. the Austrian army advanced upon us, and we were very hotly engaged. The cannonade was terrible; the

enemy's force was so much superior to ours that they might easily have hurled us into the Danube by piercing the cavalry line which formed our only centre, and if the Emperor had been in the archduke's place he would certainly have taken that course. But the Austrian commander-in-chief was too methodical to act in this determined way, therefore instead of boldly massing a strong force in the direction of our *tête de pont*, he occupied the whole of the first day in attacking Aspern and Essling, which he carried and lost five or six times after murderous combats. As soon as one of these villages was occupied by the enemy, the Emperor sent up reserves to retake it, and if we were again driven from it, he took it again, though both places were on fire. During this alternation of successes and reverses, the Austrian cavalry several times threatened our centre, but ours repulsed it and returned to its place between the two villages, though terribly cut up by the enemy's artillery. Thus the action continued till ten in the evening, the French remaining masters of Essling and Aspern, while the Austrians, withdrawing their left and centre, did nothing but make some fruitless attacks on Aspern. They brought up, however, strong reinforcements for the morrow's action.

During this first day of the battle, though Marshal Lannes' staff, being always engaged in carrying orders to the most exposed points, had incurred great danger, we had yet no loss to deplore, and we were beginning to congratulate ourselves when, as the sun went down, the enemy, wishing to cover his retreat by a redoubled fire, sent a hail of projectiles at us. At that moment d'Albuquerque, la Bourdonnaye, and I, standing facing the marshal, were reporting to him upon orders which we had been sent to convey, having our backs consequently towards the enemy's guns. A ball struck poor d'Albuquerque in the loins, flinging him over the head of his horse, and laying him stone dead at the marshal's feet. "There," he exclaimed, "is the end of the poor lad's romance! But he has at any rate died nobly." A second ball passed between la Bourdonnaye's saddle and the spine of his horse without touching either horse or rider, a really miraculous shot. But the front of the saddle-tree was so violently smashed between la Bourdonnaye's thighs, that the wood and the iron were forced into his flesh, and he suffered for a long time from this extraordinary wound.

At the moment of the brisk cannonade which had just killed poor d'Albuquerque, Lannes, observing that the Austrians were making a retrograde movement, thought it a good opening for

a cavalry charge. He called me to carry the order to Marshal Bessières, who, as I have said, had just been placed under his command by the Emperor. I was on duty; so the next aide-de-camp in course for service came up. It was De Viry. Marshal Lannes gave him the following order: "Go and tell Marshal Bessières that I *order* him to *charge home*." This expression, conveying that the charge must be pushed till the sabres are in the enemy's bodies, obviously is very like a reprimand; as implying that hitherto the cavalry has not acted with sufficient vigour. The expression "I order," employed by one marshal to another, was also very rough. Lannes used the two phrases intentionally.

Off went De Viry, fulfilled his instructions, and returned to the marshal, who asked, "What did you say to Marshal Bessières?" "I informed him that your Excellency begged him to order a general charge of the cavalry." Lannes shrugged his shoulders, and cried, "You are a baby; send another officer!" This time it was Labédoyère. The marshal knew he was of firmer character than De Viry, and gave him the same message, emphasizing the expressions "I order" and "charge home." Labédoyère did not see Lannes' intention, and did not like to repeat the words *verbatim* to Bessières; so he too employed a circumlocution. Accordingly when he came back and reported the words he had used, Lannes turned his back on him. At that moment I galloped up to the staff. It was not my turn for duty, but the marshal called me and said, "Marbot, Marshal Augereau assured me that you were a man I could count on. So far I have found his words justified by your conduct. I should like a further proof. Go and tell Marshal Bessières that I order him to charge home. You understand, sir, *home*." As he spoke he poked me in the ribs with his finger. I perfectly understood that Lannes wished to mortify Bessières, first by taking a harsh way of reminding him that the Emperor had put him in a subordinate post to himself, and further by finding fault with his management of the cavalry. I was perturbed at being obliged to transmit offensive expressions to the other marshal. It was easy to foresee that they might have awkward results; but my immediate chief must be obeyed.

So I galloped off to the centie, wishing that one of the shots which were dropping thickly about might bowl over my horse, and give me a good excuse for not accomplishing my disagreeable mission! I approached Marshal Bessières with much respect, and begged to speak with him in private. "Speak up, sir," he

replied stiffly. So I had to say in presence of his staff and a crowd of superior officers, "Marshal Lannes directs me to tell your Excellency that he orders you to charge home." Bessières angrily exclaimed, "Is that the way to speak to a marshal, sir? *Orders! charge home!* You shall be severely punished for this rudeness." I answered, "Marshal, the more offensive the terms I have used seem to your Excellency, the more sure you may be that in using them I only obeyed my orders." I saluted and returned to Lannes. "Well, what did you say to Marshal Bessières?" "That your Excellency ordered him to charge home." "Right; here is one aide-de-camp at any rate who understands me." In spite of this compliment, you may imagine that I was very sorry to have had to deliver such a message. However, the cavalry charge came off; General d'Espagne was killed, but the result was very good. Whereon Lannes said, "You see that my stern injunction has produced an excellent effect; but for it *M. le Maréchal* Bessières would have fiddled about all day."

Night came on, and the battle ceased both in the centre and on our right, on which Lannes determined to join the Emperor, who was bivouacking within the works of the *tête de pont*. But hardly had we started, when the marshal, hearing brisk firing in Aspern, where Masséna was in command, wished to go and see what was taking place in the village. He bade his staff go on to the Emperor's bivouac, and taking only myself and an orderly, bade me guide him to Aspern, where I had been several times in the course of the day. I went in that direction; with the moon and the blaze of Essling and Aspern we had plenty of light. Still, as the frequent paths were apt to be hidden by the tall corn, and I was afraid of losing myself in it, I dismounted in order to find the way better. Soon the marshal dismounted also, and walked by my side, chatting about the day's fighting and the chances of that which would take place on the morrow. A quarter of an hour brought us close to Aspern, the approaches to which were lined by the bivouac fires of Masséna's troops. Wishing to speak to him, Marshal Lannes bade me go forward to ascertain his quarters. Before we had gone many steps I perceived Masséna walking in front of the camp with Marshal Bessières. The wound in my forehead which I had received in Spain prevented me from wearing a busby, and I was the only one among the marshal's aides-de-camp who had a cocked hat, and Bessières recognizing me by this, but not yet noticing Marshal Lannes, came towards me, saying, "Ah! it is you, sir; if what you said

recently came from you alone, I will teach you to choose your expressions better when speaking to your superiors ; if you were only obeying your marshal he shall give me satisfaction ; and I bid you tell him so." Then Marshal Lannes, leaping forward like a lion, passed in front of me, and seizing my arm, cried : " Marbot, I owe you an apology , for though I believed I could be certain of your attachment, I had some doubts remaining as to the manner in which you had transmitted my orders to this gentleman ; but I see that I was unfair to you " Then, addressing Bessières, " I wonder how you dare to find fault with one of my aides-de-camp. He was the first to mount on the walls at Ratisbon, he crossed the Danube at the risk of almost certain death, he has just been twice wounded in Spain, while there are some so-called soldiers who haven't had a scratch in their lives, and have got their promotion by playing the spy and informer on their comrades. What fault have you to find with this officer ? " " Sir," said Bessières, " your aide-de-camp came and told me that you ordered me to charge home ; it appears to me that such expressions are unseemly ! " " They are quite right, sir, and it was I who dictated them ; did not the Emperor tell you that you were under my orders ? " Bessières replied with hesitation, " The Emperor warned me that I must comply with your opinion." " Know, sir," cried the marshal, " that in military matters people do not comply, they obey. If the Emperor had thought fit to place me under your command, I should have offered him my resignation. But so long as you are under mine, I shall give you orders and you will obey ; otherwise I shall withdraw the command of the troops from you. As for charging home, I gave you the order because you did not do it, and because all the morning you were parading before the enemy without approaching him boldly." " But that's an insult," said Bessières angrily ; " you shall give me satisfaction ! " " This very moment if you like ! " cried Lannes, laying his hand on his sword.

During this discussion, old Masséna, interposing between the adversaries, sought to calm them, and not succeeding, he took the high tone in his turn. " I am your senior, gentlemen ; you are in my camp, and I shall not permit you to give my troops the scandalous spectacle of seeing two marshals draw on each other, and that in presence of the enemy. I summon you, therefore, in the name of the Emperor, to separate at once." Then, adopting a gentler manner, he took Marshal Lannes by the arm, and led him to the further end of the bivouac, while Bessières

returned to his own. You may suppose how distressed I was by this deplorable scene. Finally, Marshal Lannes, remounting, set off for the Emperor's bivouac where my comrades were already established. On reaching it he took Napoleon aside, and related what had happened. The Emperor at once sent for Marshal Bessières, whom he received sternly, then they went some distance away, and walked rapidly, the Emperor appearing to be reprimanding him severely. Marshal Bessières looked confused, and must have felt still more so when the Emperor sat down to dinner without inviting him, while he made Marshal Lannes take a seat at his right hand. My comrades and I were as sad this evening as we had been cheerful the night before. We had just seen poor d'Albuquerque killed; we had close beside us la Bourdonnaye horribly wounded, and groaning so as to break our hearts; and we were, besides, agitated with sad presentiments with regard to the result of the battle, of which we had seen only the first part.

Having at his disposal twice as many troops as on the previous day, on the morrow the Emperor took steps to attack. Marshal Masséna and three of his infantry divisions remained in Aspern: the fourth, that of General Boudet, was left at Essling, under the command of Marshal Lannes, whose corps occupied the space between the two villages, having as its second line Bessières' cavalry, still under the orders of Lannes. The imperial guard formed the reserve. The Emperor's reprimand to Marshal Bessières had been so severe that, as soon as he saw Lannes, he came to ask him how he wished his troops to be placed. The marshal, wishing to establish his authority, replied, "As you await my orders, sir, I order you to place them at such a point." The expression was harsh, but one must remember how Bessières had behaved to Lannes in the days of the Consulate. He appeared hurt, but obeyed in silence.

So far the Emperor had been acting on the defensive, while the troops were crossing the river, but now that the numbers whom he had on the battlefield were doubled, and Marshal Davout's corps had assembled at Ebersdorf, and begun to cross, Napoleon judged that the time had come for assuming the offensive, and ordered Marshal Lannes at the head of the infantry divisions of Saint-Hilaire, Tharreau, Claparède, and Demont, followed by two divisions of cuirassiers, to break the enemy's centre. Lannes advanced proudly into the plain; nothing could resist him. In a moment he captured a battalion, five guns, and

a flag. At first the Austrians retreated in good order, but as their centre was obliged to extend in proportion as we advanced it was at last broken through. Their troops fell into such disorder that we could see the officers and sergeants striking their soldiers with sticks, without being able to keep them in the ranks. If our advance had continued a few moments longer, it would have been all up with the Archduke's army.

Everything foretold a complete victory for us. Masséna and General Boudet were making ready to issue from Aspern and Essling, and to fall back upon the Austrians, when, to our surprise, an aide-de-camp from the Emperor came up with orders to Marshal Lannes to suspend his attacking movement. Trees and other objects floating in the Danube had caused a new breach in the bridge, and the arrival of Davout's troops and of the ammunition was delayed. After an hour's waiting the passage was repaired, and, though the enemy had profited by the delay to reinforce his centre, we renewed our attack. Again the Austrians were giving ground, when we heard that an immense piece of the great bridge had been carried away, and would take forty-eight hours to replace. The Emperor accordingly ordered Lannes to halt on the ground which he had taken.

This mishap, which hindered us from winning a brilliant victory, came about as follows. An Austrian officer, posted on look-out duty with some companies of Jagers in the islands above Aspern, had embarked in a small boat and gone out to the middle of the river to get a distant view of our troops crossing the bridges. Thus he witnessed the first breach caused by the floating trees, and the idea struck him that the same accident might be repeated as fast as we repaired the damages. So he had a number of beams and some fireboats launched down the stream, destroying some of our pontoons. But seeing that the engineers quickly replaced them, the officer caused a large floating mill to be set on fire and towed out into mid-stream. Borne down upon our principal bridge, it broke away a large part of it. Perceiving instantly that all hope of restoring the passage, and enabling Davout to reach the field of battle, was abandoned for that day, the Emperor ordered Lannes to withdraw his troops by degrees to their former position, between Aspern and Essling, so that, resting on those villages, they might hold their ground against the enemy. The movement was being carried out in perfect order, when the archduke who had at first been puzzled by our retreat, heard that the bridge was broken, and saw a chance of

driving the French army into the Danube. With this view he sent his cavalry against the most advanced of our divisions, that of Saint-Hilaire. Our battalions repulsed the charge, and the enemy then opened upon them with a heavy artillery fire. Just then I was bearing an order from Lannes to General Saint-Hilaire. Hardly had I reached him when a storm of grapeshot struck his staff, killing several officers and smashing the general's leg. He died under amputation. I was myself struck in the thigh by a grapeshot, which tore out a piece of flesh as large as an egg, but the wound was not dangerous, and I was able to return and report to the marshal. I found him with the Emperor, who, seeing me covered with blood, remarked, "Your turn comes round pretty often!" Both he and the marshal felt the loss of General Saint-Hilaire keenly.

Seeing the division attacked at all points, the marshal went to take command of it. He withdrew it slowly, often facing towards the enemy, until our right rested on Essling, which was still held by Boudet's division. Though my wound was not yet dressed, I thought I ought to go with the marshal. In the course of the retreat, my friend De Vuy had his shoulder smashed by a bullet, and I had some difficulty in getting him brought to the entrenchments.

The position was very critical. Compelled to act on the defensive, the Emperor posted his army in an arc, having the Danube for its chord, our right resting on the river in rear of Essling, our left in rear of Aspern. Under pain of being driven into the river we had to keep up the fight for the rest of the day; it was now 9 a.m., and not till nightfall should we be able to retire to the island of Lobau by the weak bridge over the small branch. The archduke, recognizing the weakness of our position, repeatedly attacked the two villages and the centre, but fortunately for us, did not think of forcing our weakest point, between Essling and the Danube, by which a strong column pushed vigorously forward might have reached the *tête de pont* and destroyed us. All along our lines the slaughter was terrible, but absolutely necessary to save the honour of France and the portion of the army which had crossed the Danube.

To check the energy of the enemy's attacks, Marshal Lannes frequently resumed the offensive against their centre, and forced it back, but they soon returned with reinforcements. On one of these occasions, Labédoyère got a grapeshot in his foot, and Watteville a dislocated shoulder, his horse being killed under



him by a cannon-ball. Thus of all the staff Sub-lieutenant Le Couteulx and I remained, and I could not leave the marshal alone with that young officer, who, though brave enough, had no experience. Wishing to retain me, he said, "Go, and get dressed; if you can then sit your horse, come back to me." I went to the first field-hospital; the crowd of wounded was enormous, and lint had run short. A doctor put into my wound some of the coarse tow which is used as wadding for cannon, and the rough fibres gave me a good deal of pain. Under other circumstances I should have gone to the rear, but now every man had to display all his energy, and I went back to the marshal. I found him very anxious, having just heard that the Austrians had taken half of Aspern from Masséna. That village was taken and retaken many times. Essling was being vigorously attacked at that very instant, and bravely defended by Boudet's division. So fierce were both sides that they were fighting in the midst of the burning houses, and barricading themselves with the hacked corpses which blocked the streets. Five times the Hungarian grenadiers were driven back, but their sixth attack succeeded. They got possession of the village, all but the great granary, into which General Boudet withdrew, as into a citadel.

While this fighting was going on, the marshal sent me several times into Essling. The danger was considerable, but in the excitement I even forgot the pain of my wound.

At length, perceiving that, repeating his fault of the day before, he was wasting his forces against our two bastions, Essling and Aspern, and neglecting our centre, where a well-sustained attack with his reserve would bring him to our bridge and secure the destruction of the French army, the archduke launched large masses of cavalry, supported by heavy columns of infantry, on this point. Marshal Lannes, not surprised by this display of force, gave orders that the Austrians should be allowed to approach within gun-shot range and received them with such a furious fire of musketry and grape that they halted, nor could the stimulating presence of the archduke induce them to come a single pace nearer. They could perceive behind our line the bearskin caps of the Old Guard, which was advancing in a stately column, with shouldered arms.

Cleverly profiting by the enemy's hesitation, Marshal Lannes caused Bessières to charge them at the head of two divisions of cavalry. Part of the Austrian battalions and squadrons were overthrown, and the archduke, finding his attack on our centre

unsuccessful, thought to profit at least by the advantage which the capture of Essling offered. At that moment, however, the Emperor ordered his aide-de-camp, General Mouton, to retake the village. Hurling himself upon the Hungarian grenadiers, he drove them out, and remained master of Essling, a feat which covered himself and the Young Guard with glory, and earned him later on the title of Count of Lobau.

These successes on our part having slackened the enemy's ardour, the archduke, whose losses were enormous, abandoned the hope of forcing our position, and for the rest of the day only kept up an ineffectual combat. This terrible thirty hours' battle was drawing to its end. It was high time, for our ammunition was nearly exhausted. Had it not been for the activity with which Davout kept sending it over in small boats from the right bank, it would have failed utterly. As, however, the boats came few and far between, the Emperor bade us economise, and our fire became mere sharpshooting practice, the enemy at the same time reducing his.

While the two armies were mutually watching each other but not moving, and the commanders in groups in rear of the battalions were discussing the events of the day, Marshal Lannes, weary with riding, had dismounted, and was walking about with Major-General Pouzet. Just then a spent ball struck the general on the head, laying him dead at the marshal's feet. He had been formerly a sergeant in the Champagne Regiment, and at the beginning of the Revolution was at the camp of Le Miral when my father commanded there. At the same time the battalion of volunteers from the Gers, in which Lannes was sub-lieutenant, formed part of the division. The sergeants of the old line regiments having the task of instructing the volunteers, that of Gers fell to the share of Pouzet. Quickly perceiving the young sub-lieutenant's talents, he did not confine himself to teaching him the manual exercise, but gave him such instruction in manoeuvres that he became an excellent tactician. Attributing his first promotion to Pouzet's instruction, Lannes was much attached to him, and in proportion as he got on himself he used his interest to advance his friend. His grief, then, at seeing him fall dead was very great.

At that moment we were a little in advance of the tile-works, to the left, near Essling. In his emotion, wishing to get away from the corpse, the marshal went a hundred paces in the direction of Enzersdorf, and seated himself, deep in thought, on the further

side of a ditch, from which he could watch the troops. A quarter of an hour later, four soldiers laboriously carrying in a cloak a dead officer whose face could not be seen stopped to rest in front of the marshal. The cloak fell open, and Lannes recognized Pouzet. "Oh," he cried, "is this terrible sight going to follow me everywhere?" Getting up, he went and sat down at the edge of another ditch, his hand over his eyes and his legs crossed. As he sat there, plunged in gloomy meditation, a small three-pound shot, fired from a gun at Enzersdorf, ricocheted, and struck him just where his legs crossed. The knee-pan of one was smashed, and the back sinews of the other torn. Instantly I rushed towards the marshal, who said, "I am wounded; it's nothing much; give me your hand to help me up." He tried to rise, but could not. The infantry regiments in front of us sent some men at once to carry the marshal to an ambulance, but, having neither stretcher nor cloak, we had to take him in our arms, an attitude which caused him horrible pain. Then a sergeant, seeing in the distance the soldiers who were carrying General Pouzet's body, ran and asked them for the cloak in which he was wrapped. We were about to lay the marshal on it, so as to carry him with less pain; but he recognized the cloak, and said to me, "This is my poor friend's; it is covered with his blood; I will not use it. Drag me along rather how you can." Not far off I saw a clump of trees; I sent M. le Couteulx and some grenadiers there and they presently returned with a stretcher covered with boughs. We carried the marshal to the *tête de pont*, where the chief surgeons proceeded to dress his wound, first holding a private consultation, in which they could not agree as to what should be done. Dr. Larrey was in favour of amputating the leg of which the knee-pan was broken; another, whose name I forget, wanted to cut off both; while Dr. Yvan, from whom I heard these details, was against any amputation. This surgeon, who had long known the marshal, asserted that his firmness of character gave some chance of a cure, while an operation performed in such hot weather would inevitably bring him to the grave. Larrey was the senior surgeon of the army, and his opinion prevailed. One of the marshal's legs was amputated. He bore the operation with great courage; it was hardly over when the Emperor came up. The interview was most touching. The Emperor, kneeling beside the stretcher, wept as he embraced the marshal, whose blood soon stained his white kerseymere waistcoat.

Some evil-disposed persons have written that Marshal Lannes addressed the Emperor reproachfully, and implored him to make war no longer ; but as I was at that moment supporting the marshal's shoulders and heard everything that he said, I can assert that this was not the case. On the contrary, the marshal felt the proofs of the Emperor's concern very deeply, and when the latter was obliged to go away to give the orders required for the safety of the army, and said, "You will live, my friend, you will live," the marshal replied, pressing his hand, "I trust I may, if I can still be of use to France and to your Majesty "

In spite of his cruel sufferings the marshal did not forget the position of his troops, but every moment asked for news of them. He learnt with pleasure that as the enemy did not venture to pursue they were profiting by nightfall to return to the island of Lobau. His anxiety extended to his aides-de-camp who had been wounded near him ; he asked how they were going on, and when he knew that I had been dressed with coarse tow he asked Dr. Larrey to examine my wound. I should have liked to carry the marshal to Ebersdorf, on the right bank, but the broken bridge prevented this, and we did not dare to put him on board of a frail boat. He was therefore compelled to pass the night on the island, where, for want of a mattress, I borrowed a dozen cavalry cloaks to make him a bed. We were short of everything, and had not even good water to give the marshal, who was parched with thirst. We offered him Danube water, but the flood had made this so muddy that he could not drink it, and said, resignedly, "We are like sailors who die of thirst with water all round them." My desire to soothe his sufferings led me to devise a new kind of filter. One of the marshal's valets, who had remained on the island, had with him a small portmanteau containing linen. I took one of the marshal's shirts of fine material ; we tied all the openings with string except one, and, plunging into the Danube the kind of bag thus made, we drew it out full, and then hung it over a large can, so that the water filtering through the linen was cleared of nearly all the earthy particles. The poor marshal, who had followed my operations with eager eyes, was at last able to get a draught, which, if not perfect, was at least fresh and clear, and was very grateful for my invention. The care which I was bestowing on my illustrious patient could not avert my fears for the fate which might befall him if the Austrians were to cross the small arm of the river and attack us on the island. What could I then do for him ? I thought for a moment that my fears

were going to be realized, for a battery near Enzersdorf sent several shots at us ; but the fire did not last long.

A boat of some size was sent by the Emperor on the 23rd to bring Marshal Lannes to the right bank. I put him and our wounded comrades into it, and when we reached Ebersdorf, sent the latter to Vienna in the charge of M. le Couteulx, remaining myself alone with the marshal. He was taken to one of the best houses in Ebersdorf, and I sent for all his people to come and join him there.

The Emperor profited cleverly by the time which the Austrians left him, and never was his prodigious activity better employed. Aided by the indefatigable Davout and his divisions, he did on the 23rd alone more than another general could have got done in a week. A well-organized service of boats brought provisions and ammunition to the island, the wounded were all got away to Vienna ; hospitals were established ; materials in great quantity collected to repair the bridges, build fresh ones, and protect them by a stockade ; a hundred guns of the largest calibre, captured in Vienna, were taken to Ebersdorf. By the 24th, communication with the island was re-established, and the Emperor marched Lannes' division, the guard, and all the cavalry on to the right bank, leaving only Masséna's corps to fortify the island, and put in battery the big guns which had been brought up. This point being secured, the Emperor ordered Bernadotte's army corps and the various divisions of the Germanic Confederation to come on to Vienna, which would enable him to repulse the archduke in the event of his venturing across the river to attack us. A few days later we received a powerful reinforcement. A French army under Eugène Beauharnais, coming from Italy, took up its position on our right.

As soon as the troops had effected their retreat into the island of Lobau, and on to the right bank of the Danube, the Emperor took up his quarters at Ebersdorf in order to survey the arrangements for a fresh crossing. Not one bridge, but three, were to be constructed, all having a strong stockade of piles up stream from them to withstand any floating objects which the enemy might launch at them. The care which the Emperor bestowed on these important works did not prevent him from coming twice a day to visit Marshal Lannes. For the first four days after his wound the marshal went on as well as possible ; he preserved perfect equanimity, and conversed very calmly. So far was he from renouncing the service of his country, as some

writers have stated, that he made plans for the future. Learning that Mesler, the celebrated Viennese mechanician, had made for the Austrian general, Count Palfy, an artificial leg with which he could walk and ride as well as ever, the marshal asked me to write to that artist, asking him to come and measure him for a leg. But the oppressive heat which we had experienced for some time became more intense, with disastrous results to the wounded man. He was attacked by high fever, accompanied with terrible delirium. The critical situation in which he had left the army was always on his mind, and he fancied himself still on the battlefield. He would call his aides-de-camp in a loud voice, bidding one tell the cuirassiers to charge, another to bring the artillery to such and such a point, and so on. In vain did Dr. Yvan and I try to soothe him; he did not understand us. His excitement kept increasing; he no longer recognized even the Emperor. This condition lasted several days without his getting a moment's sleep or resting from his imaginary combats. At length, in the night between the 29th and 30th, he left off giving his orders, a great weakness succeeded the delirium; he recovered all his mental faculties, recognized me, pressed my hand, spoke of his wife, his five children, his father, and, as I was very near his pillow, he rested his head on my shoulder, appeared to be falling asleep, and passed away with a sigh.\* It was daybreak on May 30. A few moments later the Emperor arrived for his morning visit. I thought it my duty to meet him and let him know of the sad event, cautioning him not to enter the infected atmosphere of the room. But Napoleon, putting me aside, advanced to the marshal's body, which he embraced, bathing it with tears, and saying repeatedly, "What a loss for France and for me!" Berthier tried in vain to draw him away from the sad sight; he remained for more than an hour, and only yielded when Berthier pointed out that General Bertrand and the engineer officers were waiting to execute an important piece of work, for which he had himself fixed the time. As he went away he expressed his satisfaction with the unremitting care which I had taken of the marshal, and bade me have the body embalmed, and everything got ready for its transport to France.

As I am writing the history of my life, I have to be constantly

\*[It will be observed that Marbot's report of the last days and death of Marshal Lannes differs materially from the sensational account given by Sir Walter Scott, mainly, it would appear, on the authority of Napoleon himself (as reported by Las Cases) and Savary.]

coming back to personal details. After the death of Marshal Lannes I went to Vienna to get my wound attended to. I lay on my bed deep in sad meditations ; for not only did I regret for his own sake the marshal who had been so kind to me, but I could not disguise from myself that the loss of such a supporter changed my position vastly. The Emperor had, indeed, told me at Molk that he appointed me major, and both he and Berthier addressed me as such , but, as in the bustle of the war, no commissions had been drawn out, I was actually still only a captain. My fears for my future were terminated by a piece of good luck. My comrade, la Bourdonnaye, far more seriously wounded than I, lay in the next room to mine, and we often chatted through the open door. M Mounier, the Emperor's secretary, afterwards peer of France, often came to see la Bourdonnaye, and I made his acquaintance. Having often heard my performances and my wounds spoken of at head-quarters, and seeing me with a fresh mark of the enemy's fire, he asked what reward I had got. "None," said I. "It can only be by an oversight," replied he, "for I am sure I saw your name for one of the commissions lying in the Emperor's portfolio." Next day I learnt from him that he had placed the commission under the Emperor's eyes, and that the Emperor had written on the margin, "This officer shall enter the mounted chasseurs of my guard as major", thus granting me a great and unprecedented favour, for the officers of the guard had army rank superior to that which they held in the corps. In thus admitting me as major, Napoleon raised me two steps at once, and gave me the rank of *major*, or lieutenant-colonel in the line, which was magnificent. I was not, however, dazzled by this advantage, although, as the guard did garrison duty in Paris, I should be able to see more of my mother ; but Marshal Bessières was general in command of the guard, and not only did he give a bad reception to officers whom he had not recommended himself, but I feared his ill-will on account of the incident at Essling.

I was in a painful state of uncertainty when Prince Eugène, Viceroy of Italy, arrived at Vienna, and took up his quarters in the Archduke Albert's palace. One day Masséna came to visit him, and, wishing to show kindness to Marshal Lannes' aides-de-camp, came up to our rooms and stayed some time with me, as he had known me at the time of the siege of Genoa. I told him my difficulty, and he replied, "No doubt it would be a great advantage to you to enter the guard, but you would expose yourself to Marshal Bessières' vengeance. Come and be my

aide-de-camp, and you shall be received like a child of my family, as the son of a good general who died when fighting under me, and I will take care of your promotion " Enticed by these promises, I accepted, Masséna went off at once to the Emperor, who finally agreed to his request, and sent me on June 18 my commission as major to be aide-de-camp to Masséna.

Delighted though I was at being at length a field-officer, it was not long before I was sorry for having accepted Masséna's offer. An hour after my appointment as aide-de-camp came Marshal Bessières bringing with his own hands my nomination to the guard, he assured me that he would have much pleasure in receiving me in the corps, as he knew that in bearing the order to him on the field of Essling I was only obeying the instructions of Marshal Lannes. I was deeply grateful for this kind and straightforward action, and much regretted that I had been so prompt in engaging myself to Masséna; but it was too late to go back on my decision. I feared at the time that my promotion would suffer, but luckily it was not so, for M. Mounier, who took my place in the guard, was still only major when I became colonel. It is true that he passed the next two years in Paris, while I was in the thick of the fire and got two more wounds.

Napoleon rewarded Marshal Lannes' staff plentifully. Among others, Saint-Mars became colonel of the 3rd Chasseurs, and Labédoyère aide-de-camp to Prince Eugène. As for me, as soon as I could get to Schonbrunn to thank the Emperor for my promotion, his Majesty did me the honour of saying, "I should have liked to have you in my guard, however, as Marshal Masséna wants you for his aide-de-camp, and that suits you, I have no objection; but in order to show in a special way how pleased I am with you, I appoint you knight of the Empire, with an annuity of 2,000 francs." If I had dared I should have begged the Emperor to return to his first purpose, and admit me into his guard; but how could I tell him the reason why I had originally declined? That being impossible, I confined myself to thanking him, but it was with a sore heart. However, having to resign myself to the position into which my own hot-headedness had brought me, I put aside useless regrets, and took all the more care of my wound, so that I might be fit to accompany my new marshal in the fighting which was sure to follow our next passage of the Danube.



## CHAPTER XXII

*BY THE* end of June I was well enough to join Masséna's headquarters on the isle of Lobau, and was greeted in friendly fashion by my new comrades. The staff was numerous, and contained several officers of distinction.

As the moment approached for crossing the Danube again, the Austrians watched more assiduously the bank of the small arm of the river which lay between us and them. They fortified Enzersdorf, and if a group of French soldiers came too near the part of the island opposite that village their outposts would fire upon them; but they took no notice of parties of two or three. The Emperor wished to have a near view of the enemy's preparations, and it has been said that in order to do so without danger he disguised himself as a private, and did sentry's duty. This report is incorrect; the real fact was as follows. The Emperor and Marshal Masséna, wearing sergeants' great-coats, and followed by Sainte-Croix in a private's uniform, went close up to the bank. The colonel stripped himself, and went into the water, while Napoleon and Masséna, to still any suspicion on the part of the enemy, took off their coats as though they too proposed to bathe, and then examined at their ease the point where they wished to throw the bridges across. The Austrians were so accustomed to see our soldiers come in little parties to bathe at that place that they remained quietly lying on the grass. This fact shows that in war commanders ought strictly to forbid this kind of truce, and marking off of neutral points, which the troops on either side often establish for their respective convenience.

Meanwhile the day of the great battle was drawing on. Napoleon had assembled round Ebersdorf the Army of Italy, the corps of Davout and Bernadotte with the guard, and transformed the island of Lobau into a vast fortress. Three strong bridges secured the passage of the large arm of the Danube, and everything was ready for throwing several across the small arm. To confirm the archduke in the belief that he intended to cross again between Essling and Aspern, Napoleon had the small bridge by which we had retreated after the battle of Essling reconstructed after the night of July 1, and sent across two divisions whose skirmishers might attract the attention of the enemy while all was making ready for our attack on Enzersdorf. It is hard to understand how the archduke could have supposed that Napoleon

would make a front attack upon the huge fortifications with which he had surrounded Essling and Aspern ; this would indeed have been taking the bull by the horns.

In pursuance of the Emperor's instructions, the French army began its attack at 9 p m. on July 5 Just then a tremendous storm burst ; the night was of the darkest, the rain fell in torrents and the noise of the thunder mingled with that of our artillery, which, sheltered from the enemy's shot by an epaulement, aimed all its fire at Essling and Aspern. Thus confirmed in the belief that we were going to land at that point, the archduke turned all his attention thither, without troubling himself about Enzersdorf, upon which the bulk of our force was marching As soon as the first shots were heard Marshal Masséna, though still in much pain, was placed in a small open carriage and, surrounded by his aides-de-camp, was driven towards the point where the first attack was to be made The Emperor soon joined us. He was in good spirits and said to the marshal : " I am delighted at this storm. What a fine night for us ! The Austrians cannot see our preparations to cross opposite Enzersdorf, and they will know nothing of them till we have gained that important position ; by which time our bridges will be placed and part of my army formed on the bank which they think we are defending."

July 5 served only as preparation for the decisive battle of the morrow The night passed quietly, our army, with its three cavalry divisions detached towards Leopoldsdorf, had its true right near Grosshofen ; our centre was at Aderklaa ; our left somewhat withheld at Breitenlee, giving our line the form of an angle, of which Wagram was the apex. The tents of the Emperor and his guard were a little in advance of Raschdorf.

At daybreak on the 6th the battle was renewed with more vigour than on the previous day Much to Napoleon's surprise, the archduke, who had till then confined himself to the defensive, began to attack, and took Aderklaa from us. Soon the artillery fire extended over the whole line ; never in the memory of man had the like been seen, for the number of pieces brought into action by the two armies amounted to 1,200. The Austrian left wing, under the archduke in person, crossed the Russbach, and debouched by those columns towards Leopoldsdorf, Glinzensdorf, and Grosshofen, but was stoutly resisted, and even checked by Davout and Grouchy's cavalry by the time that Napoleon came up at the head of an enormous reserve. Seeing the extreme right of his line engaged, he had supposed for a moment that

the Archduke John had joined the enemy's main army. So far was this, however, from being the case, that, as we afterwards learnt, he was at that moment at Pressburg, eight leagues from the field of battle. Deprived of the support from him which they had hoped for, the Austrian left soon repented having attacked us. Overwhelmed by superior forces, more especially of artillery, it was driven back across the Russbach, with heavy loss, by Davout, who then sent a portion of his troops across, and marched by both banks on Neusiedel.

His right thus secured, the Emperor returned with his guard to the centre, and while Bernadotte attacked Wagram, and Oudinot marched on Baumersdorf, he ordered Masséna to retake Aderklaa. Taken and retaken this village finally remained in the hands of the Austrian grenadiers, whom the archduke led to a renewed attack, while at the same time he launched a strong column of cavalry against the Saxons, under Bernadotte, routing them completely, and flinging them on Masséna's troops, who were thrown into momentary disorder. The marshal was in his carriage and the enemy, noticing it with its four white horses in the middle of the line, guessed that its occupant must be a person of importance, and poured a storm of shot upon it. The marshal and those about him were in great danger; we were surrounded with dead and dying. Captain Barain, an aide-de-camp, lost an arm, and Colonel Sainte-Croix was wounded.

The Emperor, galloping up, became aware that the archduke, in order to turn or even surround his left, was bringing forward his own right wing, which already occupied Sussenbrunn, Leopoldau, and Stadlau, and was marching on Aspern, thus threatening the column of Lobau. In order to be better seen by the troops, he got for a moment into the carriage, beside Masséna, and at sight of him order was restored. He bade Masséna change front to the rear, in order to bring his left to Aspern and front towards Hirschstetten, causing Macdonald with three divisions, to take up the ground which Masséna left. These movements were carried out in good order, under an artillery fire from the enemy. Thus Napoleon, profiting by the concentration of his principal forces, brought up to support Macdonald, not only strong reserves of all arms, but finally the imperial guard, which took up its position in three lines in rear of the other troops.

At this moment the positions of the two armies were very curious, the opposed lines having almost the shape of two letters Z placed side by side. The Austrian left, posted at Neusiedel,

was giving way before our right, while the two centres were holding their respective places, and our left wing was retreating along the Danube before the enemy's right. The chances of either side thus seemed to be about equal. Really, however, they were all in favour of Napoleon—in the first place, because it was unlikely that the village of Neusiedel, where the only means of resistance was afforded by an old fortified tower, would hold out long against the attack which Davout was delivering with his usual vigour ; and it was easy to see that when this was taken, the Austrian left, being outflanked and without support, would retreat indefinitely and get separated from the centre, while our left wing, though beaten at the moment, was in its retreat coming near to the island of Lobau, the powerful artillery on which would check the Austrians, and prevent them from following up their success. Secondly, Napoleon acting on inner lines, could hold a great part of his troops in reserve, and yet show a front in different directions ; while the archduke, being obliged to extend his army, in order to execute his great movement on an outer line with the view of surrounding us, was not in force at any point. The Emperor, observing this mistake, was perfectly calm, though he could read in the faces of his staff the anxiety caused by the conquering march of the enemy's right, which, always driving Masséna's corps before it, had already reached the battlefield of May 22, and after crushing Boudet's division by a formidable charge of cavalry, was threatening our rear. But the success of the Austrians was short-lived. The hundred heavy guns with which Napoleon's foresight had armed the island of Lobau opened a scathing fire upon the enemy's right, and it was compelled, under pain of annihilation, to halt in its triumphant course, and retire in its turn. Masséna was then able to reform his divisions, which had lost heavily. We thought that Napoleon would profit by the disorder into which the cannonade had thrown the enemy's right wing to attack with his reserves ; Marshal Masséna, indeed, sent me to ask for instructions on this point. But the Emperor remained impassible, his eyes ever fixed on the extreme right towards Neusiedel (which lies high and is surmounted by a tall tower, visible from all parts of the field), waiting to hurl himself upon the enemy's centre and right until Davout had beaten the left and flung it back behind that village. A valiant defence was being maintained by the Prince of Hesse-Homburg, who was there wounded ; but at last we suddenly saw the smoke of Davout's guns beyond the tower. Beyond a doubt the enemy's

left was beaten. Then turning to me, the Emperor said : " Quick ! tell Masséna to fall upon whatever is in front of him, and the battle is won." At the same time the aides-de-camp from all the other corps were sent off to their chiefs with an order for a simultaneous attack. At this supreme moment Napoleon said to General Lauriston, " Take a hundred guns, sixty from my guard, and crush the enemy's column." As soon as their fire had shaken the Austrians, Marshal Bessières charged them with six regiments of heavy cavalry, supported by part of the cavalry of the guard. In vain did the archduke form squares : they were broken, with the loss of their guns and a great number of men. Our centre advanced in its turn, under Macdonald, and Sussenbrunn, Bietenlee, and Adeiklaa were carried after a smart resistance. Meanwhile Masséna had recovered the ground lost on our left, and was pressing the enemy hard, forcing him beyond Stadlau and Kagran ; and Davout, calling Oudinot to his support, occupied the heights beyond the Russbach, and captured Wagiam. This decided the defeat of the Austrians : they retreated all along the line, retiring in very good order, along the road to Moravia.

In order to rest for a few hours after its victory, our army took up its position with its left at Floridsdorf, its centre in front of Gerhardsdorf, and its right beyond the Russbach. The Emperor's tents were pitched between Adeiklaa and Raschdorf, and Masséna's head-quarters were at Leopoldau. The replacement of the old Spitz bridge put the army in direct communication with Vienna, which favoured the transport of the wounded to the hospitals, and of food and ammunition to the army.

In the absence of pursuit, the Austrian losses were much less considerable than they might have been. Still, they admitted 24,000 killed and wounded, among the former three of their generals. One of them, Wukassowitz, had distinguished himself against Bonaparte in Italy ; the other two, Nordmann and D'Aspre, were Frenchmen in arms against their country. According to the bulletins we made 20,000 prisoners and captured 30 guns ; but I believe this estimate was much exaggerated. We only took a few colours. Our loss was nearly equal to that of the enemy ; Generals Lacour, Gauthier, and Lasalle, and seven colonels were killed. The enemy had ten generals, including the archduke, wounded ; the number of ours was twenty-one, among them, Marshal Bessières. On the evening of the battle the Emperor rewarded the services of Macdonald, Oudinot, and Marmont by giving each of them his marshal's bâton. It was

not, however, in his power to give them the talents required to command an army; brave and good divisional generals as they were when in the Emperor's hands they showed themselves clumsy when they were away from him, either in devising a plan of campaign, or in executing it, or modifying it according to circumstances. It was held in the army that the Emperor not being able to replace Lannes, wanted to get the small change for him: but we must remember that these three marshals played an unlucky part in the campaigns which ended in the fall of Napoleon and the ruin of the country.

When a battle is fought in summer, it often happens that the ripe corn is set on fire by shells and gun-wadding; but in no battle of the Empire did this occur on such a scale as at Wagram. The season was early, and the weather hot, the battlefield was completely covered with crops ready for harvest, which caught quickly and carried the fire with terrific rapidity. The movements of both armies were hampered by the necessity of avoiding it; for if once troops were overtaken by it, pouches and wagons exploded, carrying destruction through the ranks. Whole regiments might be seen hastening out of the way of the fire, and taking up their position where the corn had been burnt already; but this means of escape was only open to the able-bodied. Of the soldiers who were severely wounded great numbers perished in the flames; and of those whom the fire did not reach, many lay for days hidden by the tall corn, living during that time on the ears. The Emperor had the plain searched by bands of cavalry, and vehicles were brought from Vienna to remove the wounded, friends and foes alike. But few of those even whom the fire had passed recovered, and the soldiers had a saying that straw-fire had killed nearly as many as gun-fire.

The two days of the battle were an anxious time for the Viennese, who, from their roofs and towers, could enjoy a full view of all that took place, and who swayed from hope to fear with the progress of the fight. The famous and witty field-marshal Prince de Ligne, now well advanced in years,\* had assembled the best society in Vienna in his country house, on the highest of the neighbouring hills, whence the eye could take in the whole field of battle. With his experience of war and his keen intelligence, he quickly seized Napoleon's design and the archduke's blunders, and foretold the defeat of the latter. When

\*[Born 1735 He lived five years longer, dying during the Congress of Vienna.]

the Viennese saw the right of their army, on the 6th, rolling back our left, they broke into a frenzy of joy, and through our glasses we could see thousands of men and women waving hats and handkerchiefs to kindle still further the courage of their troops, who were winning at that point, but there only. The Prince de Ligne did not share the joy of the Viennese, and I have it from one who was close by the old soldier that he said to his guests, "Do not rejoice just yet; in less than a quarter of an hour the archduke will be beaten. He has no reserves, and you see the plain is crowded with the masses of Napoleon's!" His prediction was justified.

Among the multitude of episodes to which the battle of Wagram gave rise, the most important, and one which produced very strong feeling in the army, has not been related by any author. I mean the disgrace of General Bernadotte, who was ordered off the field by the Emperor. Between these two eminent persons no love was ever lost. This notwithstanding, Napoleon had included Bernadotte in the first creation of marshals, and made him Prince of Ponte Corvo at the request of Joseph Bonaparte, whose sister-in-law Bernadotte had married. Nothing, however, could appease Bernadotte's hatred and envy of Napoleon. He flattered him to his face, and afterwards, as the Emperor well knew, criticized and found fault. The Emperor, however, restrained his irritation until on the first day of the battle of Wagram Bernadotte's lack of vigour and false tactics allowed the Austrians to retake the important position of Deutsch-Wagram. It seems that after this repulse Bernadotte said to some officers that the crossing of the Danube and subsequent action had been mismanaged, and that if he had been in command he could by a scientific manœuvre have compelled the archduke to surrender almost without a blow. This remark was reported the same evening to the Emperor, who was naturally angry. Such were the terms on which Napoleon and Bernadotte stood when the undecided action was resumed on the 6th.

When the battle was at its height, the Saxons, badly handled by Bernadotte, were repulsed and charged by the enemy's cavalry, being flung in disorder upon Masséna's corps, which they nearly carried with them. The Saxons are brave, but the best of troops are sometimes routed; and in such cases it is of no use for the officers to try to rally the men who are within reach of the enemy's sabres and bayonets. Generals and colonels should get as quickly as possible to the head of the flying mass,

then face about, and by their presence and their words arrest the movement of retreat, and re-form the battalions. In conformity with this rule, Bernadotte, whose personal bravery was unquestioned, galloped off into the plain at the head of his staff, to get in front of the fugitives and stop them. Hardly was he clear of the throng, when he found himself face to face with the Emperor, who observed ironically, "Is that the scientific manœuvre by which you were going to make the archduke lay down his arms?" Bernadotte's vexation at the rout of his army was heightened by learning that the Emperor knew of his inconsiderate remark of the previous day, and he remained speechless. Presently recovering himself, he tried to mutter some words of explanation; but the Emperor in a severe and haughty tone, said: "I remove you, sir, from the command of the army corps, which you handle so badly. Withdraw at once, and leave the Grand Army within twenty-four hours; a bungler like you is no good to me." Therewith he turned his back on the marshal, and, taking command for the moment of the Saxons, restored order in their ranks, and led them again to meet the enemy.

Under any circumstances, Bernadotte would have been in despair at such an outburst; but as he had been ordered to leave the field at the moment when he was galloping ahead of the fugitives, which might give an opening for slanderous tongues to reflect on his courage, though the object of his retreat was to check that of his soldiers, he understood how much worse it made his position, and it is asserted that in his despair he wished to throw himself on the enemy's bayonets. His aides-de-camp, however, held him back, and took him away from the Saxon troops. All day long he strayed about the battlefield, and stayed towards evening behind our left wing at the village of Leopoldau, where his officers persuaded him to pass the night in the pretty little château belonging to that place. Hardly, however, was he established, when Masséna, who had ordered his head-quarters to be fixed at Leopoldau, came to take possession of the same house. As it is customary for generals to be quartered in the midst of their troops, and not to lodge in villages where their colleagues' regiments are, Bernadotte wished to give way to Masséna; the latter, however, not yet knowing of his colleague's mishap, begged him to stay and share the quarters with him, to which Bernadotte agreed. While arrangements were being made for their lodging, an officer who had witnessed the scene between the Emperor and Bernadotte came and told Masséna of it, whereupon he changed



his mind, and discovered that the house was not roomy enough for two marshals and their staffs. Wishing, however, to keep up the appearance of generosity, he said to his aides-de-camp, "This dwelling was mine by rights, but as poor Bernadotte is in trouble must give it up to him, find me another place—a barn, or anywhere." Then he got into his carriage and went off without word to Bernadotte, who felt this desertion deeply. In his asperation he committed another and very serious mistake; although no longer in command of the Saxon troops, he addressed them in a general order, in which he made the most of their exploits, and consequently of his own, without waiting for the usual assignment of credit on the part of the commander-in-chief. His infringement of regulations increased the Emperor's anger, and Bernadotte was obliged to withdraw from the army and return to France.

## CHAPTER XXIII

*OWN* AS for my own adventures in this terrible battle. Though frequently much exposed, especially on the second day, when the enemy's artillery converged its fire on Marshal Masséna's carriage, and we were literally under a hail of cannon-balls, which struck down a good many around me, I was lucky enough not to be wounded. I was also in considerable danger when the Austrian valky had broken and routed Boudet's division, and the marshal sent me to that general in the middle of 10,000 flying soldiers, who were being hewn down by the cavalry. Again I was more than once in danger when, in carrying orders, I had to pass near one of the many spots where the corn was blazing. By frequent turns I managed to escape the flames, but it was impossible to avoid crossing the fields where the ashes of the burnt straw were still hot enough to scorch the horses' feet. Two of mine were rendered useless for some time by the injuries they thus received, and a third was in such pain that he was within an ace of rolling over in the half-extinguished straw. However, I got through without any serious accident; but though I escaped personal damage, a disagreeable thing befell me, which had very injurious results.

On the second day of the battle I got into almost hopeless trouble with Masséna. The way of it was this. The marshal sent me with a message to the Emperor; I had the very greatest

difficulty in reaching him, and was coming back after having galloped more than three leagues over the yet burning ashes of the corn. My horse, dead beat, and with his legs half-burnt, could go no further when I got back to Masséna, and found him in a great difficulty. His corps was retreating before the enemy's right along the Danube, and the infantry of Boudet's division, broken by the Austrian cavalry, which was sabring them mercilessly, were flying pell-mell across the plain. It was the most critical moment of the battle. From his carriage the marshal could see the imminent danger, and was calmly making his dispositions to maintain order in the three infantry divisions which as yet were unbroken. For this purpose he had been obliged to send so many aides-de-camp to his generals that he had none with him except his son, Prosper Masséna, a young lieutenant. At that moment he saw that the fugitives from Boudet's division were making for the three divisions which were still fighting, and were on the point of flinging themselves upon their ranks, and drawing them along in a general rout. To stop this catastrophe the marshal wished to tell the generals and officers to direct the torrent of fliers towards the island of Lobau, where the disordered troops would find a secure shelter behind the powerful artillery. It was a dangerous mission, as there was every probability that the aide-de-camp who went into that disorderly rabble would be attacked by some of the enemy's troopers. The marshal could not make up his mind to expose his son to this danger, but he had no other officer near him, and it was clear that the order must be carried.

I came up just at the right moment to extricate Masséna from this cruel dilemma, so, without giving me time to take breath, he ordered me to throw myself into the danger which he dreaded for his son; but observing that my horse could hardly stand, he lent me one of his, which an orderly was leading. I was too well acquainted with military duty not to be aware that a general cannot bind himself to follow the arrangements which his aides-de-camp have made amongst themselves for taking their turn of duty, however great the peril may be; the chief must be free in a given case to employ whichever officer he thinks best suited to get his orders executed. Thus, although Prosper had not carried a single order all day, and it was his turn to go, I made no remark. I will even say that my self-esteem hindered me from divining the marshal's real motive in sending me on a duty both difficult and dangerous when it ought to have fallen to

another, and I was proud of his confidence in me. But Masséna soon destroyed my illusion by saying, in a wheedling tone, "You understand, my friend, why I do not send my son, although it's his turn, I am afraid of getting him killed. You understand? you understand?" I should have held my tongue, but, disgusted with such ill-disguised selfishness, I could not refrain from answering, and that in the presence of several generals: "Marshal, I was going under the impression that I was about to fulfil a duty; I am sorry that you have corrected my mistake, for now I understand perfectly that, being obliged to send one of your aides-de-camp to almost certain death, you would rather it should be I than your son, but I think you might have spared me this cruel plain speaking." And without waiting a reply I went off at full gallop towards Boudet's division, which the enemy's troopers were pitilessly slaughtering. As I left the carriage I heard a discussion begin between the marshal and his son, but the uproar of the battle and the speed at which I was going prevented me from catching their words. Their sense, however, was shortly explained, for hardly had I reached Boudet's division and begun doing my utmost to direct the terrified crowd towards the island of Lobau, when I beheld Prosper Masséna at my side. The brave lad, indignant at the way in which his father had sent me into danger and wished to reduce him to inactivity, had escaped unawares to follow me. "I wish," said he, "at least to share the danger from which I ought to have saved you if my father's blind affection had not made him unjust to you when it was my turn to go." The young man's noble straightforwardness pleased me; in his place I should have wished to do the same. Still, I had rather he had been further off at this critical moment, for no one who has not seen it can form an idea of a mass of infantry which has been broken and is being actively pursued by cavalry. Sabres and lances were working terrible execution among this rabble of terrified men, who were flying in disorder instead of taking the equally easy and much safer course of forming themselves into groups and defending themselves with the bayonet. Prosper Masséna was very brave, and in no way daunted by the danger, although we found ourselves every moment in this chaos face to face with the enemy's troopers. My position then became very critical, since I had a threefold task to fulfil. First, to parry the blows aimed at young Masséna, who had never learnt the sword exercise and used his weapon clumsily; secondly, to defend myself, and lastly, to speak to our

demoralized soldiers to make them understand that they were to go towards the island of Lobau and not towards the division which were still in line. Neither of us received any wound for when the Austrian troopers perceived that we were determined to defend ourselves vigorously, they left us, and turned their attention to the unresisting foot-soldiers.

When troops are in disorder, the soldiers fling themselves like sheep in the direction where they see their comrades running and thus, as soon as I had imparted the marshal's orders to a certain number of officers, and they had shouted to their people to run towards the island, the stream of fugitives made in that direction. I found General Boudet at last, and he succeeded under the fire of our guns in rallying his troops. My task was thus at an end, and I returned with Prosper towards the marshal. But in my desire to take the shortest road, I imprudently passed near a clump of trees, behind which some hundred Austrian uhlans were posted. They charged upon us unawares, we meanwhile making at full speed for a line of French cavalry which was coming our way. We were none too soon, for the enemy's squadron was on the point of reaching us, and was pressing us so close that I thought for a moment that we were going to be killed or taken prisoners. But at the approach of our men the uhlans wheeled about, all but one officer, who, being admirably mounted, would not leave us without having a shot at us. One bullet pierced the neck of Prosper's horse, and the animal, throwing up his head violently, covered young Masséna's face with blood. I thought he was wounded, and was getting ready to defend him against the uhlan officer, when we were met by the advanced files of the French regiment. These, firing their carbines at the Austrian officer, laid him dead on the spot, just as he was turning to gallop off.

Prosper and I then returned to the marshal, who uttered a cry of grief on seeing his son covered with blood. But on finding that he was not wounded he gave free vent to his anger, and in the presence of several generals, his own aides-de-camp, and two orderly officers of the Emperor's, he scolded his son roundly, and ended his lecture with the words, "Who ordered you to go and stick your head into that row, you young idiot?" Prosper's answer was really sublime. "Who ordered me? My honour! This is my first campaign. I am already lieutenant and member of the Legion of Honour; I have received several foreign decorations, and so far I have done nothing for them. I wished to

show my comrades, the army, and France that if I am not destined to have the military talent of my illustrious father, I am at least worthy by my courage to bear the name of Masséna." Seeing that his son's noble statements met with the approbation of all the bystanders, the marshal made no answer ; but his anger fell chiefly on me, whom he accused of having carried his son away, when on the contrary his presence was a great hindrance to me. The two orderly officers having reported at head-quarters the scene between the marshal and his son, Napoleon heard of it, and happening to come that evening to Leopoldau, sent for Prosper, and said to him, taking him in a friendly way by the ear : " Good, very good, my dear boy ; that is how young people like you ought to start on their career." Then turning to the marshal, he said in a low tone, but loud enough to be heard by General Bertrand, from whom I have the story, " I love my brother Louis no less than you your son ; but when he was my aide-de-camp in Italy he did his turn of duty like the others, and I should have been afraid of bringing him into discredit if I had sent one of his comrades into danger instead of him." This reproof from the Emperor, in addition to the answer which I had been foolish enough to make to Masséna, naturally set him still more against me. From that day forward he never addressed me with *tu*, and although outwardly he treated me well, I knew that the grudge would remain, and as you will see I was not mistaken.

Never again did the Austrians fight with so much vigour as at Wagram ; their retreat was admirable for its coolness and good order. They had, no doubt, the advantage, for the reasons I have stated, of leaving the field without being pursued ; but I am not able to explain the reason for Napoleon's delay in following them up on the ensuing morning. The Emperor did not commence the pursuit till 2 p.m., and went himself no more than three leagues, staying the night at the château of Volkersdorf, from which the Emperor of Austria had on the two previous days watched the battle. General Vandamme was left in command at Vienna, General Reynier in the island of Lobau, Oudinot at Wagram, and Macdonald at Floridsdorf. His rear thus secured, Napoleon sent Marmont and Davout in pursuit on the road to Moravia, and Masséna on that to Bohemia. The Army of Italy and the guard marched between the two high roads, ready to give support where it was wanted.

The stronger portion of the Austrian army was on the road to Bohemia. The archduke had made good use of the night of the

6th, and so much of the 7th as Napoleon had allowed him, and his baggage wagons and artillery were well out of our reach. On the 8th Masséna continued the pursuit, but we only had a slight engagement. We occupied the town of Stockerau, taking large stores of provisions, especially wine, which delighted the soldiers. Continuing on the 9th, the army was stopped by a strong force, before Hollabrunn. A brisk fight ensued, in which General Bruyère, remembering his mistake, handled his division more prudently, but exposed himself freely, and got severely wounded. The unlucky town of Hollabrunn, hardly rebuilt after the fire in 1805, was again reduced to ashes, and again many wounded men were buried in the ruins. The enemy withdrew with loss.

During the night of the 9th the marshal sent me to the Emperor with a report of the action. After a long march, and frequently losing my way in country roads, I reached Napoleon, still at the château of Volkersdorf. His Majesty had just learned that a great part of the Austrian army, leaving the road to Moravia, was marching towards Laa, to cross the Taya, and rejoin the archduke at Znaim, and had sent Marmont in haste to follow them. He took the same direction himself on the 10th, while Davout pushed on to Nikolsburg, and took it. I was sent back to Masséna with orders to march quickly on Znaim, where the enemy appeared to be concentrating, with the view of again giving battle. All through the 10th the enemy's rear-guard retreated steadily before Masséna's corps.

On July 11, an ill-omened day for me, Masséna's corps appeared before Znaim about 10 a.m., and half a league to our right we could see Marmont's divisions on the plateau of Teschwitz, which they had reached by the road from Laa to Brunn. By mid-day the Emperor and his guard were at Zuckerhandel, and the Army of Italy not far away. The town of Znaim is surrounded by a solid wall, and stands on a vine-clad hill, at the foot of which runs the river Taya and a large brook named Laschen, which joins the Taya below Teschwitz. Thus the hill of Znaim forms a position entrenched by nature, for the banks at most points bristle with steep rocks difficult of access. The ground falls towards the village of Oblass, through which runs the Vienna road, by which we arrived.

Having had no answer to his proposal of an armistice, the archduke resolved to profit by the good position which he occupied, and risk the chance of another battle. Accordingly he formed his army in two lines, the first having its right on the Taya near

Klosterbruck, its centre opposite Teswitz, and its left reaching to Kukrowitz. The second line occupied Znaym, the Galgenberg, and Brenditz, with the reserves in rear ; while a swarm of skirmishers defended the vineyards between Znaym and the two streams.

On arriving before Oblass Masséna occupied that village and the double bridge which crosses the river at the so-called "Pheasants' Island." Legrand's division, after capturing it, went on towards Alt-Schallersdorf and Klosterbruck, a large convent turned into a tobacco factory. Here our troops met with a brisk resistance, and as our artillery were unable to pass through the vines, and had consequently to fire uphill from the bank of the river, it was unable to afford them any support. The marshal regretted that his inability to mount his horse prevented him from going to see for himself what could be done to remedy this state of things ; whereupon I ventured to say that having explored the ground before the attack, I thought that a battery going from Oblass along the right bank of the river, and taking up its position above the village of Edelspitz, might do good service. Masséna, thanking me for the suggestion, ordered me to guide six guns to the spot named ; and these, taking in rear the troops defending Klosterbruck and Alt-Schallersdorf, did so much execution among them that they quickly abandoned those two positions to our troops. As the marshal was congratulating himself on the effect produced by this battery, I went up and suggested taking another to the Kuhberg, the highest ground on the left bank, which could be reached by strengthening the teams. He agreed ; and after some trouble I got eight guns on to the Kuhberg, whence they could play full on the Austrians massed in front of Znaym ; so that I have no doubt but that, if the battle had continued, our battery on the Kuhberg would have been of great use by forcing the enemy to retire within the place. It is the best point from which to reduce the fortress of Znaym with artillery.

While this brisk cannonade was going on, a fearful storm burst over the district. In a moment everything was under water ; the Taya overflowed ; not a gun or musket could be fired. General Legrand's troops took shelter in Klosterbruck and Schallersdorf, and most of all in the cellars hollowed out among the vineyards. But while our soldiers, unheeding the enemy, whom they supposed to be under shelter in Znaym, were emptying the casks, the arch-luke, informed doubtless of this carelessness, and wishing to cut off the retreat of Legrand's division, sent a column of a thousand

men from the town. Marching at the double down the high road, they went through Alt-Schallersdorf, and reached the first bridge at Oblass just as I was coming down the Kuhberg. I had gone up by way of Neu-Schallersdorf, having brought my guns from Oblass ; but when I went back alone it seemed useless to go so far round, as I knew that all the ground between Znaym and the Taya was occupied by our infantry. So, as soon as I reached the little bridge between Edelspitz and Pheasants' Island, I crossed the Taya to reach the large bridges on the high road opposite Oblass, where I had left the marshal. Just as I had got on to the causeway connecting these two bridges, I heard behind me, in spite of the storm, the sound of many feet marching in time. Turning my head I beheld a column of Austrian grenadiers not twenty-five paces away. My first impulse was to go off at full speed to warn the marshal and his troops ; but to my great surprise I found the bridge nearest to Oblass occupied by a brigade of French cuirassiers. General Guion, who commanded it, knowing that Legrand was on the other side of the river, and having received an indistinct order, was quietly advancing at a walk. I had hardly time to say, "There is the enemy," when the general saw them, drew his sword, and shouting "Gallop !" flew at the Austrian grenadiers. Having come to attack us unawares, they were so astounded at being thus unexpectedly attacked themselves that the foremost ranks had hardly time to bring their bayonets down. In a moment the three battalions were literally rolled over under the hoofs of the cuirassiers' horses, not one remaining on his legs. One only was killed ; we took all the rest prisoners, with three guns which they had brought to fortify Pheasants' Island.

Emboldened by their success, though not knowing the ground, the cuirassiers charged right up to the gates of Znaym, General Legrand's infantry hurrying up to their support, and the town was nearly carried. But superior forces, backed by powerful artillery, forced the French back to Alt-Schallersdorf and Klosterbruck, when Masséna sent Carra-Saint Cyr's infantry division to their support.

At this moment, the Emperor, posted on the heights of Zuckerhandel, ordered Marshal Marmont to debouch from Teswitz and get in touch with Masséna's right. The battle was spreading gradually, and in order to get nearer to it, Napoleon came to Teswitz. Masséna sent me to his Majesty to report, and I came back with orders to carry the town at any cost. Our battery



on the Kuhberg was hammering it, and Marmont was about to assault by the valley of the Leska. As they beat the charge on all sides, the sound of the drums, muffled by the rain, mingled with the thunder. Our troops, in good spirits, advanced bravely against the battalions which were stoutly awaiting them in their position before Znaym; only an occasional shot came from the houses. Everything foretold a bloody bayonet fight, when an officer from the Emperor galloped up with an order for Masséna to cease firing, as an armistice had just been concluded. The marshal at once sent officers with the news to the different points of the line, and appointed me by name to go towards that one of our brigades which was nearest to the town and had the smallest distance to cross in order to reach the enemy. Coming up in the rear of these regiments I vainly tried to speak; my voice was drowned by cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" which always preceded a fight, and the bayonets were already crossing. A moment longer, one of those terrible infantry tussles would take place, which, once started, cannot be checked. I hesitated no longer, and passing through the files I got between the lines, which were on the point of meeting. As I was shouting "Peace! Peace!" and with my left hand giving the sign for a halt, suddenly a bullet from the outskirts of the town struck me on the wrist. Some of our officers, understanding at length that I brought the order to suspend hostilities, halted their companies; others, seeing the Austrian battalions within a hundred paces, were doubtful. At the same moment, an aide-de-camp from the archduke also came between the two lines, with a view of preventing the attack, and got a bullet through his shoulder, from the same quarter. I hastened towards him, and to make both sides see for what purpose we had been sent, we testified it by embracing each other. At sight of this, the officers on both sides had no more hesitation about ordering a halt. Flocking round us they learned that an armistice had been agreed on. There were mutual congratulations; the Austrians returned to Znaym, and our troops to their former position.

The blow which I received had been so sharp that I thought my wrist was broken; luckily it was nothing of the kind, but the bullet had injured the tendon. None of my many wounds have caused me so much pain; I had to carry my arm in a sling for six months. My wound, however, was far less severe than that of the Austrian aide-de-camp. He was quite a young man, full of pluck, and in spite of what had happened would come with

me to Masséna, quite as much to see the famous old warrior as to carry a message which the archduke had sent by him. As we were going together to Klosterbruck, the Austrian officer, who was losing blood freely, nearly fainted, and I proposed to take him back to Znaym. But he persisted in coming with me to be treated by the French surgeons, who, he said, were much better than those of his own army. His name was Count d'Aspre, and he was the nephew of the general of that name who was killed at Wagram. Masséna received him kindly, and took every sort of care of him. As for me, the marshal, seeing me wounded again, felt bound to agree with all the officers, and even the soldiers of the brigade, who praised my devotion in going between the two armies to prevent bloodshed. Napoleon came round the bivouacs in the evening, and expressed his satisfaction with me in lively terms, adding, "You get wounded very often, but I will reward your zeal." He had formed a plan of creating a military order of the Three Fleeces, the knights of which were bound to have had at least six wounds, and I learnt afterwards that his Majesty had entered me on the list of officers to receive this decoration, of which I shall have to speak hereafter. He asked to see M. d'Aspre, who had devoted himself as I had, and gave him many complimentary messages for the archduke.

M. d'Aspre, being too badly hurt to rejoin his own army, stayed at Znaym. I saw much of him; he was a quick-witted man, but rather excitable. I too had a good deal of pain from my wound, and could not ride; therefore, Masséna sent me with despatches for the Emperor, bidding me post to Vienna, where he and the staff soon came. Our people and horses remained at Znaym. Peace took a long time to conclude, Napoleon wishing to crush Austria, while the Austrians were encouraged to hold out for better terms by the news that the English had landed in Holland and taken Flushing. Cambacérès, who governed France during the Emperor's absence, sent all available troops to the Scheldt, putting (much to Napoleon's displeasure) Bernadotte in command. The English withdrew before long.\* The conferences were resumed, and went on no faster. We continued to occupy the country, and Masséna's head-quarters remained at Vienna till November 10. My wound prevented me from taking any part in the amusements of the place, but I was kindly treated by the Countess Stibar, on whom I was quartered. At Vienna I found my friend, General Sainte-Croix, who was kept

\* [This was the unlucky "Walcheren Expedition."]

some months in bed by his wound. He was quartered in the Lobkowitz palace, where Masséna was. I passed much time with him every day, and told him about the dislike which the marshal seemed to have conceived for me since the incident at Wagram. As he had great influence with Masséna, he used it in my favour, and this, with my conduct at Znaym, restored me to a fairly good place in the marshal's esteem; but then by overplain speaking I destroyed the good result, and revived the marshal's ill-will towards me.

As I have told you, the injury to his leg caused by the fall from his horse at Lobau had compelled Masséna to use a carriage at the battle of Wagram and the subsequent actions. In the first instance, artillery horses were to be harnessed to the carriage, but it was found that they were too long for the pole and not easy enough in their action, so four horses from the marshal's stable were substituted. Two soldiers from the transport train were to drive, and they were just getting into the saddle on the evening of July 4, when the marshal's own coachman and postilion declared that as he was using his own horses it was their business to drive. No representation of the danger into which they were running could deter them from their purpose; the coachman got on the box and the postilion mounted just as if they were going for a drive in the Bois de Boulogne. The two brave servants were in constant danger for eight days, especially at Wagram, where many hundred men were killed close to the carriage, and at Guntersdorf, where the ball which struck the carriage went through the coachman's overcoat, and another ball killed the horse under the postilion. Nothing seemed to frighten these two faithful attendants, whose devotion was admired by the whole army. Even the Emperor complimented them, and observed once to Masséna: "There are 300,000 combatants on the field; now do you know who are the two bravest? Your coachman and your postilion. For all the rest of us are here in pursuance of our duty, while these two men might have excused themselves from being exposed to death. Their merit is therefore greater than that of anyone else." To the men themselves he called out: "You are two brave fellows!" Napoleon would certainly have rewarded them, but he could only give them money, and he probably thought that this might offend Masséna, in whose service the danger had been incurred, and, indeed, it was the marshal's business, and all the more so that he had an enormous fortune; 200,000 francs as army leader,

another 200,000 as Duke of Rivoli, and 500,000 as Prince of Essling. But for all that he allowed two months to pass without telling the men what he meant to do for them. One day when I and several of the aides-de-camp happened to be by Sainte-Croix's bedside, Masséna came into the room, and as we chatted over the events of the campaign, he said how fortunate it was that he had followed my advice and gone on to the field in a carriage instead of being carried by grenadiers, and thence he naturally went on to speak of the plucky conduct of his coachman and postilion. He ended by saying that he wished to reward them well, and was going to give each of them 400 francs. Then, turning to me, he had the face to ask if the two men would not be pleased? I had better have held my tongue, or merely suggested a rather higher sum; but I made the mistake of speaking too plainly and mischievously into the bargain. I knew perfectly well that Masséna only intended to give them 400 francs down; but I answered that with a pension of 400 francs added to their savings, the coachman and postilion would be secured from want in their old age. The eyes of a tigress who sees her young attacked by the hunter are not more terrible than were Masséna's on hearing me speak thus. He leapt from his chair, exclaiming: "Wretch! do you want to ruin me? What! an annuity of 400 francs? No, no, no; 400 francs once for all!" Most of my comrades prudently held their peace; but General Sainte-Croix and Major Ligniville declared plainly that the proposed reward was unworthy of the marshal, and that he ought to make it an annuity. At this Masséna could restrain himself no longer; he rushed about the room in a rage, upsetting everything in his way, even large furniture, and cried, "You want to ruin me!" His last words as he left the room were, "I would sooner see you all shot, and get a bullet through my arm, than bind myself to give an annuity of 400 francs to anyone. Go to the devil the lot of you!" Next day he came among us again, very calm outwardly, for no one could play a part better; but from that day forward General Sainte-Croix lost much of his esteem, and he bore a grudge against Ligniville which he let him see the next year in Portugal. As for me he was most angry with me of all, because I was the first to mention the annuity. The story travelled from mouth to mouth till it reached the Emperor, and one day when Masséna was dining with him, Napoleon kept bantering him about his avarice, and said that he understood he had at any rate given a good pension to the two brave servants

who drove his carriage at Wagram. Then the marshal answered that he was going to give them each an annuity of 400 francs ; so he did it without having to be shot through the arm. He was all the more angry with us, and often said to us with a sardonic laugh, " Ah ! my fine fellows, if I followed your good advice you would soon have me ruined."

The treaty of peace was signed on October 4 ; the Emperor left Austria on the 22nd, and it was ten days later before the troops had left the place. Then Masséna permitted his officers to return to France. I left Vienna November 10, driving as far as Strasburg with my comrade Ligniville. I had left my servant behind to bring one of my horses on to Paris. From Strasburg I was afraid to continue my journey alone, for my arm was much swelled, and I was in great pain. Fortunately, I found at my hotel the surgeon-major of the 10th Chasseurs, who was kind enough to dress my wound and to share my carriage as far as Paris, taking care of me on the way. The doctor left the army, and settled in Chantilly, where I met him, twenty years later, at the table of the Duke of Orleans, as commandant of the national guard. I was still very poorly when I reached Paris, but rest and my mother's care soon made me well.

Thus ended the year 1809. Now, if you recollect that I began at Astorga, in Spain, during the campaign against the English, and then took part in the siege of Saragossa, where I got a bullet through my body ; if you consider that I had next to cross part of Spain, and the whole of France and Germany ; that I was present at the battle of Eckmühl ; mounted the walls of Ratisbon ; performed the risky passage of the Danube at Molk ; fought for two days at Essling, where I was wounded in the leg ; then was engaged for sixty hours at the battle of Wagram ; and, lastly, was wounded in the arm at the action at Znaim, you will agree that this year had been very eventful for me, and had seen me pretty frequently in danger.

Although the Minister of War had assured the marshal that everything was ready for the campaign in the Peninsula, it was nothing of the kind, and the commander-in-chief had to stay a fortnight at Valladolid, looking after the departure of the troops and the transport of stores and ammunition. At last the headquarters were removed to Salamanca, where my brother and I were quartered with the Count of Montezuma, a lineal descendant of the last Emperor of Mexico. The marshal wasted three more weeks at Salamanca waiting for General Reynier's corps.

These delays, while hurtful to us, were all in favour of the English.

The last Spanish town towards the Portuguese frontier is Ciudad Rodrigo, a fortress, if the strength of its works alone be considered, of the third class, but having great importance owing to its position between Spain and Portugal, in a district with few roads, and those very difficult for large guns and the apparatus of a siege train. It was, however, absolutely necessary that the French should get possession of the place. With this resolve, Masséna left Salamanca about the middle of June, and caused Rodrigo to be invested by Ney's corps, while Junot covered the operations from the attacks of an Anglo-Portuguese army, which was encamped a few leagues from us, near the Portuguese fortress of Almeida, under Lord Wellington. Ciudad Rodrigo was defended by a brave old Spanish general of Irish origin, Andrew Herrasti.

The French, unable to believe that the English would have come so near the place just to see it captured under their eyes, expected a battle. None took place; and on July 10, the Spanish guns having been silenced, a part of the town being on fire, and the counterscarp overthrown by the explosion of a powder magazine for a space of thirty-six feet, while the ditch was filled with the ruins and the breach widely opened, Masséna resolved to give the signal for the assault. To this end Marshal Ney formed a column of 1,500 volunteers, who were to mount the breach first. Assembled at the foot of the rampart, these brave men were awaiting the signal to attack, when an officer expressed his fear that the breach was not yet practicable. Thereupon three of our soldiers mounted to the top of it, looked into the town, made such examination as was useful, and fired their muskets, rejoining their comrades without being wounded, although this bold feat was performed in broad daylight. Kindled by this example, the assaulting column advanced at a run and was on the point of dashing into the town when General Herrasti capitulated. The defence of the garrison had been very fine, but the Spanish troops composing it had good reason to complain of their desertion by the English, who had merely sent reconnoitring parties towards our camp, without attempting any serious diversion.

The siege of Rodrigo nearly cost me my life; not by the enemy's fire, but by reason of an illness which I contracted in the following manner. The neighbourhood of the town, being infertile, is

thickly inhabited, and there had been much difficulty in finding quarters for the marshal near the trenches. Finally he was put into an isolated building situated in a spot commanding the town and suburbs. As the siege promised to last long, and there was no lodging for the staff close by, we hired, at our own cost, some planks and beams, and erected a large room, where we were sheltered from sun and rain, and slept on boards, which, though rough, kept us clear of the damp rising from the soil. But the marshal was inconvenienced from the outset in his stone building by an intolerable stench, and on inquiry it was found that the building had been used to keep sheep in. Masséna proceeded to set his affections on our extempore house ; but, not liking to use his authority to eject us, came to see us on some pretext or other, and exclaimed as he entered : " Well, my lads, you have a nice place here ! May I beg for a corner to put my bed and desk in ? " This, as we saw, was sharing with the lion, and we left our excellent abode in haste, to take up our quarters in the old sheep-stall. It was paved with small stones, their interstices clogged with filth, and highly uncomfortable to lie on, from the want of long straw in Spain. Forced thus to lie on the bare ground and inhale the fetid exhalations rising from it, we all became more or less unwell before long. I was much the worst ; for in these warm countries fever always tries most those who have already suffered from it, and my Valladolid attack returned in an aggravated form. Still I resolved to take my share in the siege, and remained on duty. Duty was often pretty laborious, especially when we had to carry orders in the night to our division on the left bank of the Agueda, which was carrying out the necessary works for the reduction of the Franciscan convent, used by the enemy as a bastion. In order to reach this point from the head-quarters without coming under the fire of the place, it was necessary to make a long wind to a bridge which our troops had constructed, or else cross by a ford. One night, when all was ready for the assault, and Ney only awaited Masséna's order to give the signal, it happened to be my turn for duty, and I had to take the order. It was a dark, hot night ; I was in a high fever, and streaming with perspiration when I reached the ford. I had only once crossed it in daylight, but the dragoon orderly who was with me had crossed it several times, and offered to guide me. This he did very well till he got to the middle, where it was not more than two or three feet deep ; but then he went wrong in the darkness, and our horses, stepping on big slippery stones, fell

and we were in the water. There was no fear of drowning ; we scrambled on to the bank with ease ; but we were wet through. In any other circumstances I should only have laughed at this involuntary bath ; but, though not cold, the water checked the perspiration, and I was seized with a shivering fit. I reached the convent and passed the night in the open air beside Marshal Ney.

In hot countries sunrise is usually preceded by piercing cold. I was the more sensitive to it that day for having passed the night in wet clothes, so that when I returned to head-quarters I was much out of sorts. Still I had to report the result of the attack to Masséna before getting into dry things. He was at that moment taking his morning walk with General Friuon, his chief of staff. In their interest in my story, or wishing to get a closer view, they gradually drew near the town, and we were not more than a cannon-shot away when the marshal let me go and rest. Hardly had I gone fifty paces from them when a gigantic shell, launched from the ramparts, fell close to them. At the fearful noise of its explosion I turned round, and, seeing nothing of the marshal and the general, who were concealed by a cloud of dust and smoke, I thought they were killed, and ran to the place. To my astonishment I found them alive and none the worse, save for some contusions from the stones which the bursting shell had thrown up. They were, however, both covered with earth, especially Masséna. He had lost an eye shooting some years before, and his remaining eye was so full of sand that he could not see his way, while the bruises he had received from the stones prevented his walking. It was necessary to get him out of range, however, and, as he was small and thin, I managed, ill as I was, to take him on my shoulders and carry him out of reach of the enemy's shot. I went on and told my comrades, and they brought the marshal in without the men finding out the danger which their commander-in-chief had run.

The fatigue and excitement of the last twenty-four hours increased my fever a good deal ; still I braced myself up, and contrived to hold out till the surrender of Ciudad Rodrigo, on July 9.\* But as from this day forward the excitement which had kept me up so far had nothing more to feed on, I must needs give in to the fever. This became so alarming that I had to be carried to the one house in the town which the French shells had left intact. It was the only time that I have been seriously ill without being wounded, and this time my life was despaired of, and I was

\* [July 11, according to Napier.]



left at Ciudad Rodrigo while the army crossed the Coa and marched on Almeida. This place not being more than four leagues as the crow flies from Ciudad Rodrigo, I could hear from my sick-bed the uproar of the cannon, and every report made me writhe with rage. Often did I try to rise, and the fruitlessness of the attempts, by showing me how utterly weak I was, increased my wretchedness. My brother and my comrades, kept by their duty at Almeida, were far away, and my solitude was only broken by the short visits of Dr. Blancheton, who, clever as he was, could only treat me very inefficiently for want of medicaments. The air of the town was tainted by the stench of many thousands of corpses which lay unburied among the rubbish of the ruined houses. A temperature of more than eighty-five degrees, aggravating these causes of unhealthiness, soon brought typhus. Both the garrison and such of the inhabitants as had remained in the place to look after what was left of their property suffered terribly. I was left to the care of my servant, and, with all his zeal, he could not get me what I required. My illness increased, and I became delirious. I remember that there were in my room some large pictures representing the four quarters of the earth. Africa, which was right in front of my bed, had at her feet a huge lion, the eyes of which seemed to be fixed on me, while I could not take mine from them. At last one day I thought I saw him move, and, wishing to anticipate his attack, I tottered up, took my sword, and, striking with edge and point, I hewed the lion to pieces. After this truly Quixotic feat I fell half-fainting on the floor, where the doctor found me. He had all the pictures removed from the room, after which I grew quieter. My lucid moments were not less terrible; it was painful to think of my melancholy situation and utter loneliness. Death on the battlefield seemed sweet to me compared to that which I expected, and I regretted not to have fallen like a soldier. To die in a bed of fever while there was fighting near me seemed to me a horrible, almost a shameful thing.

I had been in this dreadful position for a month, when on August 26, towards nightfall, a fearful explosion was heard. The earth trembled till I thought the house was coming down. It was the fortress of Almeida which had just blown up through the explosion of a huge powder magazine, and the disturbance was distinctly felt at Rodrigo, from which one may judge the effects which it had produced in Almeida itself. The unlucky place was destroyed from top to bottom; not six houses remained standing. Six hundred of the garrison were killed, and many

wounded; some fifty French employed on the siege works were struck by splinters of stone. In pursuance of instructions from his Government, Lord Wellington, with the view of sparing English blood at the cost of that of his allies, after having entrusted the defence of Ciudad Rodrigo to the Spanish troops, who had just surrendered, had left that of Almeida to the Portuguese, Colonel Cox, the governor, being the only Englishman in the place. That brave officer, not suffering himself to be intimidated by the horrible disaster which had just destroyed almost all his means of resistance, proposed to the garrison to continue their defence behind the ruins of the city. But the Portuguese troops, terrified, and led away by their officers, especially by Bernardo Costa, the lieutenant-governor, and José Bareiros, commanding the artillery, refused, and Colonel Cox, being unsupported, was compelled to capitulate.

After having thus got possession of Almeida, Marshal Masséna, not being able to establish himself among the ruins of the town, moved his head-quarters to Fort Concepcion, on the Spanish frontier. The French had destroyed part of the fortifications, but the buildings were sufficiently intact to afford lodging. There Masséna made preparations for his expedition to Lisbon. My brother and my comrades took advantage of this interval to come and see me. Their presence increased the soothing effect which the capture of Almeida had produced on my spirits. The fever disappeared, and in a few days I was convalescent. I was eager for change of air, and, with the aid of my brother and some of my friends, I contrived to ride the short distance to Fort Concepcion. My comrades, who had feared that they would never see me again, received me most affectionately; but the marshal, whom I had not seen since the day when I had carried him out of the range of the guns of Rodrigo, never said a word to me about my illness. After a fortnight in the fort in good air and able to rest, I recovered my full health, and was ready for the campaign in Portugal. Before relating the events of this famous and disastrous campaign I must briefly make you acquainted with what had taken place in the Peninsula since the Emperor left it in 1809.

[The next two chapters in the original are mainly compiled from Napier, book vi. chap. 5-7 and vii. chap. 1-2. They contain the account of the capture of Oporto by Wellington, and bring the history up to the time of Marbot's joining the army in the Peninsula.]

## CHAPTER XXIV

*TOWARDS THE* end of 1809 the Emperor had placed all the army corps in Spain under the orders of his brother Joseph ; but as he was no soldier, Napoleon only allowed him a nominal authority, and, by making Soult chief of the staff, gave him the real command of all the French troops in the south of Spain. While these were successful in capturing Seville and Cordova, and even investing Cadiz, the seat of the governing junta, General Suchet was administering Aragon and Valencia, most of the fortified towns in which he had taken by siege. Saint-Cyr and Augereau were active in Catalonia, where the warlike population was defending itself with vigour. The troops of the Young Guard were steadily keeping up an irregular warfare against the guerrillas of Navarre and the northern provinces. Generals Bonnet and Drouet occupied Biscay in the Asturias ; Ney held the province of Salamanca, and Junot that of Valladolid. The French had evacuated Galicia, the country being too poor to maintain our troops. Such was, in brief, the position of our armies in Spain when Masséna entered Portugal after taking Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida.

Having left the neighbourhood of Almeida on September 14, 1810, the army assembled next day at Celorico, where it saw the rich valley of the Mondego opening before it and might march on Coimbra by Sampayo and Ponte de Murcelha, over roads which, if not good, were at least tolerable. But under the influence of Major Pelet, his adviser, the marshal left the practicable country where the troops might have lived in comfort, and went off to the right into the mountains of Viseu, where the roads are the worst in Portugal. One need only look at the map to see how unreasonable it was to go by Viseu on the way from Celorico to Coimbra ; a mistake all the greater from the fact that Viseu is separated from the Sierra d'Alcoba by high hills, which the army might have avoided by marching down the valley of the Mondego. The neighbourhood of Viseu produces no corn or vegetables, and the troops found nothing there but lemons and grapes—not very sustaining food.

As I have already said, childish reasons sometimes produce great and mischievous results. We had a striking example of it, which influenced the result of a campaign which was to have driven the English out of Portugal, but which by its failure increased their confidence in Wellington, while it seasoned the troops who did

most to bring about our defeat in the following years. All the army knew that Masséna had brought Mme. N—— to Portugal with him. This lady, having crossed the whole of Spain in a carriage, and having remained at Salamanca during the sieges of Rodrigo and Almeida, thought fit to follow Masséna on horseback as soon as he set out to march through a country impracticable for carriages, which produced a very bad effect. The marshal, who generally took his meals alone with her, had had his table laid one day under a clump of lemon trees, the aide-de-camp's table being a hundred yards away in the same garden. Dinner was about to be served, when the commander-in-chief, wishing probably to cement the good relations which had just been established between himself and his lieutenants, remarked that as each of them had several leagues to go in order to reach his head-quarters it would be best for them to dine with him before starting. All four accepted, and Masséna, in order to prevent any further remarks on the incident of the convoy, ordered that for once the aide-de-camp's table should be set by his.

So far all went well ; but just before sitting down Masséna sent for Mme. N——. On seeing the generals she drew back, but he said to Ney, "My dear marshal, kindly take Madame." Ney turned pale, and nearly burst out ; but, restraining himself, he led the lady by the finger-tips to the table, and placed her, by Masséna's direction, on his right. During the whole meal, however, Ney said not a word to her, but talked to Montbrun, his neighbour on the left. Mme. N——, who was too quick-witted not to see how false a position she was in, was seized with a nervous attack, and fell in a faint. Then Ney, Reynier, Montbrun, and Junot left the garden, not without a vigorous and audible expression of his views on the part of Ney. Reynier and Montbrun also said plainly what they thought ; Junot spoke so bitterly, that I took the liberty of reminding him of the way in which he had met Mme. N—— at Valladolid. He answered, laughing, "Because an old hussar like me has his games sometimes, that is no reason for Masséna to imitate them. Besides, I must stand by my colleagues." From that day forward the four generals were on the worst of terms with Masséna, who, on his side, bore them no goodwill.\*

This quarrel among the chiefs could not fail to aggravate the

\*[Confirmation of these details will be found in M. Thiers's review of the causes which led to the French defeats in Portugal. (*Consulat et Empire*, book xl.)]

causes making for the ill-success of the campaign. These arose mainly from an utter want of topographical knowledge of the districts in which we were fighting; arising from the omission of the Portuguese Government—either as a defensive measure, or through indolence—to have good maps made of the kingdom. The only map in existence was as bad as could be; so that we had, as it were, to feel our way along. There were officers in plenty who had campaigned in Portugal with Soult and Junot, but they had not been in the provinces where we were, and could be of no use as guides. On the staff we had some thirty Portuguese officers, among them two generals—the Marquis of Alorna and Count Pamplona, who had come to France in 1808 with the contingent furnished to Napoleon by the court of Lisbon. Though they had only obeyed the orders of the former Government they were proscribed by the Commission of Regency, and thus had returned to seek possession of their confiscated goods in the train of the army. Masséna had hoped to get some useful information from these exiles; but except in the neighbourhood of Lisbon they knew nothing of their own country; while the English, who had been going all about it for two years, knew its configuration perfectly, gaining thereby a great advantage over us.

Another cause told no less powerfully against us. Lord Wellington, being allowed a perfectly free hand by the Government, used it to compel all the people to leave their houses, destroy all provisions and mills, and retire with their cattle to Lisbon on the approach of the French, who thus were unable to obtain any information, and had to beat the country to a great distance in order to get provisions. The Spaniards had constantly refused to adopt this terrible means of resistance at the instance of the English; but the Portuguese were more docile. We thus crossed vast districts without seeing a single inhabitant; such an exodus had not been seen within human memory. The city of Viseu was totally deserted when we entered it, yet Masséna halted the army there for six days. No military writer of any country has been able to account for Masséna's inactivity of nearly a week at Viseu, but the marshal's staff can testify that Mme. N——'s fatigue had much to do with delaying Masséna and keeping him at that place. The country was in arms, and it would have been impossible to leave her behind without exposing her to the danger of being captured. Moreover, when he had made up his mind to start, Masséna made only very short marches, halting first at Tondella. The next day, September 26, after

establishing his head-quarters at Mortagoa, on the right bank of the Criz, he lost precious time in securing the lady's quarters ; and it was not till two in the afternoon that he set out with his staff for the outposts—five good leagues off, at the foot of the Alcoba.

When an army has undergone a check it is but too common to find the generals throwing the blame on each other. This happened after Busaco, and thus it is necessary to mention here the opinion expressed before the battle by Masséna's lieutenants, who, having first urged him on to the commission of his greatest blunder, after the unfortunate event criticized his conduct. On the day but one before the battle the corps under Ney and Reynier were at the foot of the Alcoba, and in presence of the enemy. While impatiently waiting for the commander-in-chief, these two generals exchanged in writing their respective views on the position of the Anglo-Portuguese army. There exists a letter,\* dated on the morning of September 26, in which Marshal Ney says to General Reynier, "If I were in command I would attack without a moment's hesitation." Both expressed the same feeling in their correspondence with Masséna : "The position is far less formidable than it looks, and if I had not been in so subordinate a position I would have carried it without awaiting your orders." Relying on the assurance of Generals Reynier and Junot that nothing could be easier, Masséna made (although the contrary has since been affirmed) not the smallest attempt to reconnoitre, and, merely replying, "Very well, I will be back at daybreak, and we will attack," he turned and rode back to Mortagoa. Great was the astonishment at this abrupt departure, for seeing Masséna join his troops, who were encamped within cannon-shot of the enemy, everyone supposed that he would use the remaining daylight to study the position which he had to carry, and would stay with the army. In going off thus, without seeing anything for himself, he no doubt made a great mistake ; but I do not think that, after lulling to sleep his usual vigilance and urging him to attack, his lieutenants had any right to blame him as they afterwards did. On the contrary, they might well have found fault with themselves ; for, after spending two days at the foot of the Alcoba, they advised a front attack, in spite of the steepness, and made no inquiries as to the possibility of turning it—a course offering no difficulty.

Hardly had the commander-in-chief with his staff left the

\* [It will be found in the Appendix to Napier, vol. iii.]

army than night came on—and Masséna had only one eye and was not a good horseman. Our road was strewn with large stones and pieces of rock, so we had, in the darkness, to go for more than two hours at a walk to accomplish the five leagues to Mortagoa. As we went along I meditated sadly on the probable results of the battle which we were going to fight on the morrow at such a disadvantage, and imparted my reflections in a low voice to my friend Ligniville and to General Fririon. We were all most anxious that Masséna should alter his dispositions; but no officer save Pelet was allowed to submit any suggestions to him directly. Yet the matter appeared urgent, and we decided to employ an artifice, which we had sometimes used with success, for bringing the truth indirectly to his notice. Agreeing upon our parts, we got near the marshal, feigning not to see him in the darkness; then we began to talk about the coming battle, and I said that I was sorry the commander-in-chief intended to assault the position in front without being certain that it could not be turned. Then General Fririon, playing his part as arranged, answered that Ney and Reynier had stated positively that there was no other way to get past, to which Ligniville and I replied that we could not believe that, for it was impossible that the people of Mortagoa should have lived for centuries devoid of direct communication with Boialva, and with no other way to the Oporto road than by Busaco, over the steepest part of the mountains. I added that when I had made the same remark to the aides-de-camp of Ney and Reynier, and asked which of them had reconnoitred the extreme left of the enemy's position, not one answered, from which I concluded that no one had visited that part. If Masséna saw badly his hearing was extremely keen, and, as we hoped, he had not missed one word of our talk. So much struck was he, that he came up to our group, and joining in the conversation, admitted—cautious as he was—that he had assented too easily to the plan of assaulting in front. He said that he would counter-order this, and that if a way could be found of turning the position he would let the army rest next day, and on the following night would concentrate it opposite the vulnerable point and attack unawares. No doubt there would be a day's delay, but the chances of success would be better and the probable loss lighter.

So determined did the marshal appear, that when we reached Mortagoa he bade Ligniville and me try to find some inhabitant who could show us a road to Boialva without passing Busaco. It was a difficult job, for the inhabitants had all fled at the approach

of the French, and the extreme darkness was against our search. At length, however, we found in a monastery an old gardener who had stayed to take care of a sick monk. He brought us to this monk, who answered our questions freely ; he had often been from Mortagoa and Boialva by a good road which branched off a short league from the place where we were. He was all the more surprised at our not knowing this, that part of our army in going from Viseu to Mortagoa had passed the turning. Guided by the old gardener, we went to verify the monk's statement, and found that an excellent road actually went in the direction of the mountains and appeared to pass round the enemy's left. Yet Marshal Ney had stayed two days at Mortagoa without exploring this road, a knowledge of which would have saved us many disasters.

Lagniville and I, delighted at our discovery, hastened to report it to the marshal ; but we had been away more than an hour, and we found him with Major Pelet, surrounded by maps and plans. Pelet said that he had examined the mountains with a telescope by daylight and had seen in their configuration no sign of a pass to our right , moreover, he could not believe that Marshal Ney had not explored the neighbourhood while he was at Mortagoa, and as he had not found a pass it was clear that none existed, nor could we convince him of the contrary. In vain did we offer to go round and ascend the hill which the monk assured us was less steep than that of Busaco, or even to go as far as Boialva if they would give us three battalions of the head-quarters guard. In vain did General Fririon beg the marshal to accept this offer : all was useless. Masséna was very tired, he said that it was near midnight and that we must be off at four o'clock to reach the camp by daybreak, and with that he went to bed. Never did I pass a more melancholy night ; and my comrades were as sad as I. At last the hour came for our start, and we reached the outposts with the first morning light of September 27, an ill-omened day which was to behold one of the most terrible reverses which the French army ever suffered.

On finding himself in front of the position which he had scarcely examined on the previous day Masséna appeared to hesitate, and, coming up to the place where I was chatting with General Fririon, he said sadly, "Your suggestion of yesterday was worth considering." Our hopes rekindled by these few words, we doubled our efforts to induce the commander-in-chief to turn the mountain by Boialva, and he was already coming over to our way of thinking, when Ney, Reynier, and Pelet came up and



interrupted our talk with the remark that all was ready for the attack. Masséna made a few more remarks, but at length, overborne by his lieutenants, and fearing, no doubt, that he might be blamed for letting slip a victory which they declared to be certain, he gave orders towards seven o'clock to open fire.

The 2nd corps, under Reynier, attacked the enemy's right; Ney their left and centre. The French troops were drawn up on stony ground, sloping steeply down to a great ravine which separated us from the Alcoba, which was lofty, steep, and occupied by the enemy. From their commanding position they could see all our movements, while we saw only their outposts half-way up the hill between the convent of Busaco and the ravine, which at this point was so deep that the naked eye could hardly make out the movements of troops who were marching through it, and so narrow that the English bullets carried right across it. It might be regarded as an immense natural ditch, serving as the first line of defence to the natural fortifications formed by great rocks cut almost into a vertical wall. Besides this, our artillery, engaged in very bad roads and obliged to fire upwards, could render very little service; while the infantry had to contend not only against a mass of obstacles and the roughest possible ascent, but also against the best marksmen in Europe. Up to this time the English were the only troops who were perfectly practised in the use of small arms, whence their firing was far more accurate than that of any other infantry.

Although you might expect that the rules of war would be alike among civilized nations, they do, as a fact, vary immensely even in identical circumstances. Thus, when the French have to defend a position they first garnish the front and flanks with skirmishers, and then crown the heights conspicuously with their main body and reserves, which has the serious inconvenience of letting the enemy know the vulnerable point of the line. The method employed in similar cases by the English seems to me far preferable, as was often demonstrated in the Peninsular War. After having, as we do, garnished their front with skirmishers, they post their principal forces in such a way as to keep them out of sight, holding them all the time sufficiently near to the key of the position to be able to attack the enemy at once if they come near to reaching it; and this attack, made unexpectedly upon assailants who have lost heavily and think the victory already theirs, succeeds almost invariably. We had a melancholy experience of this at Busaco. In spite of the numerous obstacles

which favoured the defence, the brave men of the 2nd corps had just succeeded, after an hour of desperate work, performed with really heroic courage, in scaling the mountain, when, as they arrived panting at the summit of the ridge, they found themselves in front of a hitherto unperceived line of English infantry. After receiving them at fifteen paces with an admirably aimed and sustained fire which stretched more than five hundred men on the ground, this line dashed at the survivors with the bayonet. The unexpected attack, accompanied by a storm of grape on their flank, shook some of our battalions; but they quickly rallied, and, in spite of their heavy losses, our troops, astonished but not disconcerted, charged the English line, broke it at several points, and carried six guns. But Wellington had brought up strong reserves, while ours were at the foot of the mountain, and the French, pressed on all sides, and compelled to give up the narrow ground which they occupied on the plateau, found themselves, after a long and brisk resistance, driven in a heap down the steep descent up which they had climbed. The English lines followed them half-way down, firing volleys to which our men could not reply. All resistance being useless in so unfavourable a position, the officers ordered the men to take skirmishing order about the broken ground, and under a hail of bullets they reached the foot of the mountain. At this point we lost General Grandorge, two colonels, eighty officers, and seven or eight hundred men.

While this was taking place on our left, fortune was not more favourable to the 6th corps on our right. Although it had been arranged to attack simultaneously at all points, and Masséna had repeated the order about seven o'clock at the moment of engaging, it was half-past eight before Ney set his troops in motion. The troops attacked vigorously, and although entire files were swept away by cannon and musketry, the brigades of Feirey and Simon, with the 26th of the line, clambering up the steep rocks, flung themselves on the enemy's guns and captured three of them. The English, being reinforced, returned to the attack; General Simon, with his jaw smashed, fell, and was taken prisoner on one of the guns which he had just captured. Almost every field officer was killed or wounded, and three volleys at close quarters completed the rout of the French masses, who returned in disorder to their starting-point. Thus ended the principal fight. The losses of the 2nd and 6th corps were immense. They amounted to more than 5,000 men, including 250 officers killed, wounded, or prisoners. General Graindorge, Colonels Monier, Amy, and

Berliet killed ; two others wounded ; General Simon wounded and taken prisoner ; Generals Merle, Mancune, and Foy severely wounded, besides two colonels and thirteen majors. The enemy in their sheltered position lost far less heavily, but they admitted 2,300 men disabled. We learnt afterwards that if we had attacked the day before the English would have withdrawn without fighting, because 2,500 of their best troops were then on the other side of the Mondego, and only arrived at Busaco the night before the battle. Such was the result of the six days lost by Masséna at Viseu, and his hurry to return on the 26th to Mortagoa instead of reconnoitring the position.

The two armies maintained their respective positions ; it was a sad night for us ; the future appeared gloomy enough. At day-break on the 28th, the Alcoba echoed with mighty cheering and the strains of the English military bands. Wellington was reviewing his troops, who were saluting him with their hurrahs ; while the French at the foot of the mountain were in gloomy silence. Masséna should have mounted his horse then, reviewed his army, harangued his soldiers, until they replied by their cheers to the defiant enthusiasm of the enemy. The Emperor and Marshal Lannes would certainly have acted thus. But Masséna held aloof, walking about all alone, and making no arrangements ; while his lieutenants, especially Ney and Reynier, the very men who the day before had urged him to engage, saying that they would answer for victory, were loudly accusing him of imprudence in attacking a strong position like Busaco. When, finally, they joined the commander-in-chief, it was to propose that he should advertise our failure to the army and all the world by abandoning Portugal and take the army back into Spain. Then old Masséna, recovering a little of the energy of Rivoli, Zurich, and Genoa, and many another memorable occasion, rejected their proposal as unworthy of the army and of himself.

While the marshal was discussing with his lieutenants, General Sainte-Croix came up. On seeing him everyone expressed regret that he had not been present the day before to act as the marshal's good genius. Masséna now understood the mistake he had made in not turning the enemy's left as we had advised him, and, on hearing the state of things from Masséna himself, Sainte-Croix advised him to revert to that plan. With the general's assent, he galloped off, accompanied by Ligniville and me, to Mortagoa, whither he sent for his brigade of dragoons. As we passed through the village we picked up the convent gardener, who, at sight of

a piece of gold, consented to act as our guide, laughing when he was asked if there really existed a road to Boialva.

While Sainte-Croix's brigade, and a regiment of infantry, led the way in this new direction, the 8th corps and Montbrun's cavalry followed close behind, and the rest of the army prepared to do the same. Urged by Sainte-Croix, Masséna had at last spoken with authority, and imposed silence on his lieutenants when they persisted in denying the existence of a pass on the right.

In order to conceal from the English the movement of such of our troops as were at the foot of the Alcoba, they did not march until night, and then in dead silence. But information was soon given by the despairing cries of the French wounded, whom we were under the sad necessity of abandoning. A great number of horses, and all the beasts of burden, were employed to carry the men whom there was hope of curing; but those who had lost their legs, or were otherwise severely wounded, were left lying on the dry heath, and as the poor fellows expected to have their throats cut by the peasants as soon as the armies were out of the way, their despair was terrible.

The French army had reason to fear that Wellington, seeing them execute a flank march so near him, would attack them vigorously. This might have led to the capture of Reynier's entire corps, which would be the last to leave its position, and would remain for some hours unsupported in presence of the enemy. But the English general had no time to think of turning the French rear-guard, for he had just learnt that he was being himself turned by the pass of which the French commander-in-chief had so long denied the existence. What actually happened was this. After we had marched all the night of the 28th, the gardener, going with the head of Sainte-Croix's column, brought us by a road practicable for artillery as far as Boialva, that is to say, to the extreme left flank of the English army, so that all the positions on the Alcoba had been outflanked without a blow, and Wellington, under pain of exposing his army to be taken in rear, had to abandon Busaco in haste, to regain Coimbra, and cross the Mondego there, with a view of retreating upon Lisbon, which he did with all speed. Our advanced guard only met with a small detachment of Hanoverian hussars posted at Boialva, a pretty village situated at the southern issue from the mountains. The fertility of the country gave hopes that the army might find abundant subsistence there. A shout of joy went up from our ranks, and the soldiers very soon forgot the fatigues and dangers

of the previous days, perhaps also the unhappy comrades whom they had left dying before Busaco.

To complete the success of our movement, a good road joined Boialva with the village of Avelans on the road from Oporto to Coimbra. Sainte-Croix occupied this, and by a further piece of luck we discovered a second road from Boialva to Sardao, another village on the high road. At last, then, we had the proof of the existence of this pass, so obstinately denied by Ney, Reynier, and Pelet. Masséna must have reproached himself with having omitted to reconnoitre the strong position before which he had lost several thousand men, and which his army had now turned without meeting the least resistance.

## CHAPTER XXV

*AS SOON* as the army was clear of the defile of Boialva, Masséna marched on Coimbra by way of Milheada and Tornos. At the latter point there was a cavalry engagement, in which Sainte-Croix overthrew the English rear-guard, forcing them back on Coimbra. On October 1, the French entered that place. Deceived by the result of the battle of Busaco, and the assertion of English officers that the French army was retiring into Spain, the unhappy inhabitants of that city had abandoned themselves to a display of rejoicing. The festivities were not at an end, when suddenly came the news that the French had turned the mountains and were marching straight on Coimbra—that indeed they were not a day's journey distant. Indescribable panic prevailed; the population of 12,000 souls simultaneously with the news of the enemy's approach received orders to leave their homes forthwith. Their departure was, by the admission of English officers, a most terrible sight; I refrain from relating the heart-breaking incidents.

Wellington's army, hampered by the mass of fugitives of every age, sex, and class, men and beasts of burden in inextricable confusion, retired in the greatest disorder toward Coimbra and Pombal, many perishing in the passage of the Mondego. This was good for Masséna. But, to our great surprise, and as if he wished to allow the enemy time to restore order to get away, the commander-in-chief billeted his army in Coimbra and the adjacent villages, and waited three clear days. His excuse for this delay was the necessity of reorganizing the 2nd and 6th corps which

had suffered at Busaco, and of establishing hospitals at Coimbra ; all which he might have done while the 8th corps was in pursuit of the enemy. But the real notion for the stay at Coimbra was, in the first place, the increasing want of confidence between Masséna and his lieutenants ; and, further, his difficulty in deciding whether to leave a division in the place to cover his rear and protect the sick and wounded, or to take all his available forces for the battle which was expected to be fought outside Lisbon. In the evening of the very day, October 3,\* on which the French had left it the Portuguese militia entered.

The three further days wasted by the French at Coimbra allowed the English to get away, and it took us three days more to come up with their rear-guard at Pombal. Before our coming the body of the celebrated marquis of that name had lain in a magnificent tomb, erected in an immense mausoleum of wonderful architecture. This had been wrecked by the stragglers from the English army. They had broken the tomb and thrown the bones under the feet of their horses, which they had stabled in the vast building. A strange instance of the vanity of human things ! There, lying in the filth, when Masséna and his staff visited the place, were the scanty remains of the great minister who put down the Jesuits !

From Pombal we went on to Leyria, and at 9 a.m. our advance-guard was on the banks of the Tagus, at Santarem. There we found immense stores of provisions ; but this advantage was almost neutralized by autumnal rains such as are not seen out of the tropics except on the southern shores of the Peninsula, and which assailed us after unbroken fine weather. Both armies suffered much from this cause ; but ours reached Alemquer, a market town at the foot of the hills of Cintra, which gird Lisbon at a few leagues' distance. We quite expected to have to fight a battle before entering Lisbon, but, as we knew that the town was open on the land-side, we had no doubt of success. Meantime, however, all the neighbourhood of Lisbon had been covered with fortifications. For a year and a half the English had been working at them ; but neither Ney, who had just spent a year at Salamanca, nor Masséna, who for six months had been making ready to invade Portugal, had the least inkling of these gigantic works. Reynier and Junot were equally ignorant ; most surprising of all—incredible, indeed, if the fact were not absolutely certain—the French

\* [The statement on the last page that Masséna stayed *three* days seems incorrect.]

Government itself did not know that the hills of Cintra had been fortified. It is inconceivable how the Emperor, who had agents in every country, could have omitted to send some to Lisbon. At that time thousands of American, German, Swedish, and English ships were daily bringing into the Tagus stores for Wellington's army; and it would have been perfectly easy to have introduced some spies among the numerous sailors and clerks employed on these vessels. Knowledge of all kinds can be obtained by money; it was by this means that the Emperor kept himself informed of all that went on in England and among the great Powers of Europe. Nevertheless, he never gave Masséna any information as to the defences of Lisbon; and it was only on reaching Alemquer that the French general discovered that the hills were fortified and connected by lines of which the right touched the sea in rear of Torres Vedras, the centre was at Sobral, and the right rested on the Tagus, near Aliandra.

Masséna, who, since the advice which Ligniville and I had offered at the battle of Busaco, had evinced some kindness towards us, directed us to examine the front of the enemy's lines. They were undoubtedly of imposing strength, but very far from what people were pleased to say. The English entrenchments formed an immense arc round Lisbon, at least twenty French leagues in length. Every officer of the least experience knows well that a position of this extent cannot present the same difficulties everywhere and must have its weak spots. We became aware of several such by seeing officers, and even cavalry pickets, ride up quite easily; and we also became convinced that our engineer officers who had mapped the hills had figured an armed redoubt wherever they saw a little earth recently disturbed.

When my comrade and I reported in this sense to Masséna, the old soldier's eyes sparkled with martial ardour, and he at once issued marching orders to prepare for the attack which he reckoned on making the next day. However, on receiving the orders, his four lieutenants hastened to his quarters and a stormy discussion took place. Junot, who had commanded in Lisbon, and knew it well, declared that it seemed impossible to him to maintain so large a town, and expressed himself strongly for the attack. General Montbrun shared his opinion; but Ney and Reynier hotly opposed it, adding that the loss at Busaco, together with that of the wounded who had been abandoned at Coimbra, and the numerous sick who had been for the moment disabled by the rains, had so largely diminished the number of combatants, that

it was not possible to attack a strong position, and further, that their men were demoralized—an inaccurate statement, for the troops were showing great ardour in demanding to march upon Lisbon. Losing his patience, Masséna repeated *vivâ voce* the orders he had already given in writing, and Ney declared in so many words that he would not carry them out. The commander-in-chief was minded then to remove Ney from the command of the 6th corps, as some months later he was obliged to do. But he considered that Ney was beloved by his men, whom he had commanded for seven years; that his removal would involve that of Reynier, which would complete the discord in the army at a moment when unanimity was so eminently needed. They could not indeed decide him to leave Portugal, but they extorted from him a promise to move away from the enemy's lines, and to retire ten leagues back behind Santarem and Rio Mayor and there await fresh orders from the Emperor.

During our stay at Sobral I saw another artifice employed by the English, and one of sufficient importance to be worth noting. It is often said that thoroughbred horses are of no use in war, because their price is so high and they require so much care that it would be almost impossible to provide a squadron, much more a regiment, with them. Nor indeed do the English use them on campaign; but they have a habit of sending single officers, mounted on fast thoroughbreds, to watch the movements of a hostile army. These officers get within the enemy's cantonments, cross his line of march, keep for days on the flanks of his columns, always just out of range, till they can form a clear idea of his number and the direction of his march. After our entry into Portugal, we frequently saw observers of this kind flitting round us. It was vain to give chase to them, even with the best-mounted horsemen. The moment the English officer saw any such approach he would set spurs to his steed, and nimbly clearing ditches, hedges, and even brooks, he would make off at such speed that our men soon lost sight of him, and perhaps saw him soon after a league farther on, note-book in hand, at the top of some hillock, continuing his observations. This practice, which I never saw anyone employ like the English, and which I tried to imitate during the Russian campaign, might perhaps have saved Napoleon at Waterloo by affording him a warning of the arrival of the Prussians. Anyhow, these English "runners," who were the despair of the French generals from the moment we left Spain, increased in boldness and cunning as soon as we were in front of



Sobral. One could see them come out of the lines and race with the speed of stags through the vines and over the rocks to inspect the positions occupied by our troops.

Unable to obtain any backing from his lieutenants in his proposed attack on the lines, and being short of provisions, Masséna was compelled, on November 14, to retire ten leagues back from the hills and establish his army in a corn-growing district, where positions could be found suitable for defence. He selected the country between the Rio Mayor, the Tagus, and the Zezeire, establishing the 2nd corps at Santarem, the 8th at Torres Novas (where also he fixed his head-quarters), the 6th at Thomar, the artillery park at Tancos, while the cavalry were at Ourem with their outposts pushed as far as Leiria. Inferring from this movement that the French were in full retreat for Spain, the English followed, but cautiously and at a distance, fearing a trick to draw them out of their lines. When they found that we were halted behind the Rio Mayor they gave us some trouble, but were vigorously met; and judging that want of provisions would soon drive us to leave this district, well adapted for the defensive, they contented themselves with watching us. Lord Wellington's head-quarters were fixed at Cartaxo, opposite Santarem, and from November 1810 till March 1811 the armies faced each other, separated only by the Rio Mayor. The English, having their food supplies brought by the Tagus from Lisbon, lived in comfort; but the provisioning of our army, having no stores, and being in a contracted space, was a serious problem. Our troops, however, worked with admirable patience and industry, each contributing, like bees in a hive, his share to the common welfare. Workshops were started in every battalion; and each regiment, organizing a system of raids on a large scale, sent out detachments, armed and well led, who returned driving thousands of donkeys laden with provisions of all kinds, and immense herds of sheep, pigs, and goats, the booty being proportionately divided on its arrival. As the nearer districts became exhausted, the raids had to be pushed further afield, even to the gates of Abrantes and Coimbra; and the attacks of the infuriated peasantry, though always beaten off, caused some loss.

Early in November, Masséna had sent General Foy to report his position to the Emperor: three battalions being required to escort him in safety to the Spanish frontier. Meanwhile, not knowing when the expected reinforcements might arrive, he feared that the English army might cross the Rio Mayor, and

make an unexpected attack on our divisions at a time when every regiment had detached at least a third of its men to search for provisions. If the enemy had arrived in the middle of our cantonments while so many soldiers were away, a catastrophe would certainly have followed ; and the dispersed troops would have been liable to be beaten in detail before they could reassemble. Luckily for us, however, Lord Wellington based all his plans on lapse of time, and did not venture upon any enterprise.

Meanwhile the Emperor, whose only news of Masséna's army had so far been obtained from the London newspapers, having at length received the despatches brought by General Foy, ordered the Count of Erlon, commanding the 9th corps, cantoned near Salamanca, to march upon Portugal, and to send Gardanne's brigade forward at once with instructions to find the French army, and take it the ammunition and the draught horses of which it presumably stood in need. With all the Emperor's perspicacity it was impossible for him at Paris to judge of the numerous difficulties which would hamper Gardanne in carrying out his orders. Napoleon could never believe that the flight of Portuguese occupants at the approach of a French corps had been so universal that it was impossible to come across an inhabitant from whom one could receive the slightest information. This, however, was what befell Gardanne.

Masséna began to fear lest provisions might run short on the right bank of the Tagus, and resolved to tap a new country by throwing a portion of his army across the river, into the fertile province of Alemtejo. To this end he ordered a division to cross the Zezere and occupy Punhete, a small town at the point where that river flows into the Tagus. This seemed a good point to establish a bridge, but materials were lacking. Everything was, however, supplied by the zeal and activity of General Eblé, well supported by his subordinate artillery officers. Forges and saw-mills were built ; tools, planks, beams, anchors and ropes manufactured, numerous boats were constructed, and the work progressing as it were by magic, we conceived the hope of being able to cast a solid bridge over the Tagus.

The weather was fearful ; the roads had become torrents, and the difficulty of seeking provisions, and especially forage, was much increased. Yet our French gaiety did not desert us. In every camp societies were got up for theatricals, and the houses deserted by the inhabitants supplied us with plenty of costumes in the wardrobes which the Portuguese ladies had left behind. We

found also plenty of French books ; our quarters were comfortable, and we continued to pass the winter pretty well. Our reflections were, however, often sad, both as to the situation of the army, and our own position. For three months we had had no news from our families, from France, even from Spain. Would the Emperor send us reinforcements sufficient to take Lisbon, or should we be compelled to retreat before the English ? Our minds were full of these thoughts, when on December 27 it was suddenly reported that General Drouet, Count of Erlon, had just joined the army with the 9th corps, 25,000 to 30,000 strong. But our satisfaction was much reduced on finding that the Count of Erlon's army had never contained more than 12,000 men ; half of whom he had left on the Spanish frontier under General Claparède, bringing with him only Cornoux's division, 6,000 strong, a reinforcement quite inadequate to meet the English and take Lisbon. Instead of going at once to the commander-in-chief at Torres Novas, the Count of Erlon stopped ten leagues short of it at Thomas, Ney's head-quarters. This was a great blow to Masséna, and he sent me to the commander of the 9th corps to ask for an explanation of a course as much opposed to politeness as to military regulations. When he gave me this commission he had no doubt that the Count of Erlon had been placed by the Emperor under his orders, but there he was wrong. The instructions given by the chief of the staff to the commander of the 9th corps were only to enter Portugal, find Masséna's army, hand over to him some hundreds of draught horses with ammunition, and then to return to Spain with his troops. It is hard to understand how, after the reports which the Emperor had received from Foy and Casabianca as to the bad plight of the army, he could have limited himself to sending such weak support.

I found that the Count of Erlon had been lodging with Ney twenty-four hours. The marshal, who was anxious to get away from Portugal, had detained his guest in order that the influence of the commander-in-chief might not induce him to put their 6,000 men at his disposal, and thus enable him to resist the proposal to retreat. The count was therefore making ready to depart next day, without visiting Masséna ; to whom he begged me to make his excuses on the plea that important business called him back to the frontier.

An aide-de-camp's duties are pretty difficult, since in performing them he often has to convey instructions to his superiors which may wound their self-esteem. Sometimes in the interests

of the service he has on his own responsibility to act as interpreter of his general's wishes by giving in his name orders which he has not dictated. This is a serious—even a dangerous matter; but the tact of the aide-de-camp must enable him to judge of the circumstances. My position was as delicate as it well could be, for Masséna, not having foreseen that the commander of the 9th corps might wish to leave Portugal, had put nothing in writing on the subject. Still, if he did take away his troops the operations of the army would be paralysed, and the commander-in-chief would blame the caution which had made me shrink from speaking in his name. I took therefore, a bold resolve; and although I had never met the Count of Erlon (Ney being present the while, and strongly opposing my arguments), I took the liberty of saying that at least he ought to give Marshal Masséna time to consider the orders which he had brought from the chief of the staff, as well as time to reply to them. Finally, when the count had repeated that he could not wait, I struck my great stroke by saying: "Since your Excellency forces me to fulfil my errand to the last word, I have to inform you that Marshal Masséna, commander-in-chief of the French forces in Portugal, has directed me to convey to you both in his own name and that of the Emperor, a formal order not to move your troops, but to report yourself to him to-day at Torres Novas." The count made no reply but ordered his horses. While they were being got ready, I wrote to Masséna telling him what I had been obliged to do in his name; and I learnt later on that he approved. No doubt his interview with Masséna finally convinced the count, for he agreed to remain in Portugal and his troops were sent into quarters at Leiria. Masséna's gratitude for the firmness and readiness which I had shown was increased a few days later when he learnt that Lord Wellington had formed a plan of attacking our camp, and had been checked by the arrival of the Count of Erlon; while, if the reinforcement had been withdrawn, the English would have marched on us, and profited by our extended line to crush us with superior numbers.

## CHAPTER XXVI

*THE* *BEGAN* the year 1811 at Torres Novas, and its early days were marked by an event which saddened all the staff, the death of our comrade D'Aguesseau. This excellent young man, the

heir of an illustrious name and possessor of a large fortune, had been drawn by the desire of acquiring fame into the career of arms which might have been supposed to be closed to him by his delicate health. He had borne the fatigues of the Austrian campaign pretty well, but those which we had to undergo in Portugal were beyond his powers, and he died in the prime of life. We erected a monument to him in the principal church of Torres Novas.

Disquieted by our preparations, and wishing to know in what condition our works were, Wellington employed a strong measure which he had often found successful. One very dark night an Englishman, dressed in officer's uniform, got into a small boat on the left bank a little above Punhete, landed in silence, passed through the French outposts, and at daybreak walked boldly towards our workshops, examining everything at his ease as if he had belonged to the staff of our army. Our artilleryman and engineers coming to their work in the morning perceived the stranger, arrested him, and brought him to General Éblé, to whom this scoundrel impudently declared that he was an English officer, and that, in disgust at a piece of favouritism which had been committed to his injury, he had deserted in order to take service in our Irish legion. On being taken before the commander-in-chief he not only repeated his story, but offered to give detailed information as to the positions of the English troops, and point out the places where we might with most advantage cross the Tagus. You will hardly believe that Masséna and Pelet, much as they despised the fellow, put faith in his tale, and wishing to profit by his advice, spent whole days over the maps with him, taking notes of what he said. We of the staff were not so much taken in, for nothing could persuade us that an English officer would have deserted, and we declared plainly that in our opinion the pretended captain was nothing but a clever spy sent by Wellington; but nothing that we could say shook Masséna's and Pelet's belief. Yet our conjectures were well founded, as it was soon proved, when General Junot came to head-quarters, and his aide-de-camp recognized the so-called English officer as having acted the deserter once before in 1808, when the French army was occupying Lisbon. Junot also remembered him perfectly, although he was now wearing an infantry uniform instead of the hussar uniform which he wore at Lisbon, and advised Masséna to shoot him. But the stranger protested that he had never served in the cavalry, and to prove his identity showed a captain's

commission with which Wellington had probably supplied him in order to enable him to pass for what he professed to be. Masséna therefore did not like to order his arrest, but his suspicions were aroused, and he ordered the commanding gendarme to have him closely watched. The spy got an inkling of this, and the following night got down very cleverly from a third-floor window and reached the neighbourhood of Tancos, whence he probably swam across the Tagus, for some of his clothes were found on the bank. Thus it was clearly shown that he was an agent of the English general, and that Masséna had been tricked. His wrath fell upon Pelet, and rose to fury when he discovered that the sham deserter, who had been so imprudently admitted into his study, had walked off with a small note-book in which the effective strength of each regiment was entered. Later on we learnt that this clever scamp was no officer in the English army, but a captain of Dover smugglers who, to abundant resource and audacity, added the power of speaking several languages and of wearing every kind of disguise.

Meanwhile time passed and brought no change in our position, for although the Emperor had thrice bidden him to reinforce Masséna, Soult, imitating the attitude of Marshal Victor towards himself in 1809, had stopped on the way about the end of January to besiege Badajos. We could hear the firing distinctly, and Masséna regretted much that his colleague should be wasting precious time on a siege instead of marching towards him just when we were about to be compelled by scarcity of provisions to abandon Portugal. Even after the capture of Badajos, the Emperor blamed Marshal Soult's disobedience and said, "He captured me a town, and lost me a kingdom."

On February 5, Foy rejoined the army, bringing up a reinforcement of 2,000 men. He came from Paris, where he had held long conferences with the Emperor, and announced afresh that Soult was soon coming to join us. But as the whole of February went by and he did not appear, the Count of Erlon, whom by an inexplicable blunder the Emperor had not placed under Masséna's orders, declared that his troops could not live any longer at Leyria, and that he was going to march back to Spain. Marshal Ney and General Reynier seized this opportunity to set forth again the misery of their cause in a country which was completely ruined, and the commander-in-chief was obliged at last, after several months of obstinate resistance, to consent to a retreat towards the frontier, hoping to find there the means of supporting his army without entirely abandoning Portugal, and to invade again

as soon as the reinforcements arrived. Our retreat began on March 6. The preparations were kept so secret and executed during the night of March 5 in such good order, that the English, whose outposts were only separated from ours by the little stream of the Rio Mayor, did not discover our movement till the morning of the next day, by which time General Reynier's troops were five leagues away. Lord Wellington, in his uncertainty whether the object of our movement was to cross the Tagus at Punhete or really to retire towards Spain, lost twelve hours in hesitation ; and by the time he resolved to follow, which he did without energy and at some distance, the French army had gained a march upon him. Meanwhile, General Junot, having gone prancing imprudently in front of the English hussars, was struck on the nose by a bullet ; but the wound did not hinder him from retaining the command of the 8th corps during the rest of the campaign.\* The army moved in several columns on Pombal, Marshal Ney with the 6th corps forming the rear-guard, and valiantly defending his ground foot by foot. As for Masséna, roused at length from his torpor, he gained between the 5th and 9th of March three days on the enemy, and completely organized his retreat—one of the most difficult operations of war. Contrary to his usual custom, also, he was so cheerful as to surprise us all.

On March 12 there was a smart engagement before Redinha. Marshal Ney, having found a defensible position, decided to halt there, and Lord Wellington, taking this as a challenge, sent forward a strong body. After a hot action Ney repulsed the enemy, and continued his retreat briskly, but with the loss of two or three hundred men. The enemy lost more than a thousand,† our artillery having played on his masses for some time, while he had only two light guns in position. This engagement was of as little use to the English as to us. Why should Wellington, knowing that Ney had orders to retire, and that the French were in declared retreat, be in such a hurry to attack merely in order to make Ney resume his march a little sooner than he would otherwise have done ? I was present at this affair, and deplored the false pride of the two generals which cost so many brave men their lives with no result.

The main French army took up a position between Condeixa

\*[According to Napier, the date of Junot's wound was some weeks earlier, and it did disable him, though, of course, he may have retained the nominal command.]

†[Twelve officers and two hundred men (Napier).]

and Cardaxo. The critical moment of our retreat had arrived. Masséna, not wishing to leave Portugal, had resolved to cross the Mondego at Coimbra, and await orders and reinforcements from the Emperor in the fertile district between that town and Oporto; but Trant had cut the bridge of Coimbra, and the Mondego was so much swollen as to be unfordable. The only course open was, therefore, to reach Puente de Murcelha, and there cross the rapid torrent of the Alva. Accordingly, on the 13th the head-quarters started in that direction. We ought to have reached Miranda de Corvo the same day; but for some unknown reason the marshal established himself at Fuente-Cuberta, where, believing himself covered by the divisions which he had ordered Ney to post at Cardaxo and Condeixa, he had with him only a guard of thirty grenadiers and twenty-five dragoons. But Ney, under plea of an attack by superior forces, had abandoned these points; giving notice to Masséna so late that he did not get the letter till some hours after the execution of the movement, and might have been captured with all his staff. In fact, believing that he was under the safeguard of several French divisions, and finding the place agreeable and the weather fine, he had ordered his dinner to be served in the open air. We were sitting quietly at table under the trees near the entrance of the village, when suddenly there appeared a detachment of fifty English hussars, less than a hundred yards away. The grenadiers surrounded Masséna, while the aides-de-camp and the dragoons mounted and rode towards the enemy. As they fled at once, we supposed they were some stragglers, seeking to rejoin their army; but we soon saw an entire regiment, and perceived that the neighbouring hillsides were covered with English troops who had almost completely surrounded Fuente-Cuberta. The imminent danger in which the head-quarters were placed was due to a mistake on the part of Ney. Thinking that the commander-in-chief had had his letter, he ordered all his divisions to evacuate Cardaxo and Condeixa, thus uncovering Fuente-Cuberta. The enemy had come up in silence, and you may judge of our astonishment; but luckily night was at hand, and a thick fog rising. The English, never dreaming that the French commander would be thus separated from his army, took our group for a rear-guard, which they did not venture to attack; but it is certain that if the hussars had made a resolute charge, they would have carried off Masséna and all who were with him. Naturally when the English heard of Masséna's narrow escape they made the most of it; and Napier avers that he



only escaped their hussars by taking the feathers out of his hat. Unfortunately for this story, marshals did not wear plumes.

During this long and toilsome march, Masséna's attention was much occupied with the danger to which Mme. N—— was exposed. Several times her horse fell over fragments of rock invisible in the darkness, but although cruelly bruised, the brave woman picked herself up. After several of these falls, however, she could neither remount her horse nor walk on foot and had to be carried by grenadiers. What would have happened to her if we had been attacked, I do not know. The marshal, imploring us all the time not to abandon her, said repeatedly: "What a mistake I made in bringing a woman to the war!" However, we got out of the critical situation into which Ney had brought us.

On the following day, March 14, after beating back a smart attack upon his rear-guard, Masséna posted the mass of his troops in a strong position in front of Miranda de Corvo, in order to give the artillery and baggage wagons time to pass the defile beyond the town. Seeing the French army halted, Lord Wellington brought up a strong force, and everything promised a serious engagement when Masséna summoned his lieutenants to receive his instructions. All but Ney came at once, and as he did not arrive the commander-in-chief ordered Major Pelet and me to go and ask him to come quickly. This errand, which seemed an easy one to discharge, nearly cost me my life.

The French army was drawn up on ground descending gently in the form of an amphitheatre towards a large brook, lying between two broad hills, over the summits of which passed country roads, leading to Miranda. At the moment when Pelet and I galloped off to execute the marshal's order, the English skirmishers appeared in the distance, coming up to attack the two hills. In order to be more certain of finding Marshal Ney, my companion and I separated. Pelet took the road on the left, I that on the right, passing through a wide clearing, in which were our outposts. Hearing that Marshal Ney had passed by, less than a quarter of an hour before, I felt bound to hasten to meet him, and just as I hoped to come up with him, I heard several shots, and bullets whistled past my ears. I was no great distance from the enemy's skirmishers, posted in the woods surrounding the clearing. Although I knew that Marshal Ney had a strong escort, I was uneasy on his account, fearing that the English might have cut him off, until I saw him on the other side of the brook. Pelet was with him, and both were going in the direction of

Masséna. So, being sure that the orders had been conveyed, I was about to return, when a young English light infantry officer trotted up on his pony, crying, "Stop, Mr. Frenchman; I should like to have a little fight with you!" I saw no need to reply to this bluster, and was making my way towards our outposts, 500 yards in arrear, while the Englishman followed me, heaping insults on me. At first I took no notice, but presently he called out, "I can see by your uniform that you are on the staff of a marshal, and I will put in the London papers that the sight of me was enough to frighten away one of Masséna's or Ney's cowardly aides-de-camp!" I admit that it was a serious error on my part, but I could no longer endure this impudent challenge coolly; so, drawing my sword, I dashed furiously at my adversary. But just as I was about to meet him, I heard a rustling in the wood, and out came two English hussars, galloping to cut off my retreat. I was caught in a trap, and understood that only a most energetic defence could save me from the disgrace of being taken prisoner, through my own fault, in sight of the whole French army, which was witness to this unequal combat. So I flew upon the English officer; we met; he gave me a slash across the face, I ran my sword into his throat. His blood spurted over me, and the wretch fell from his horse to the ground, which he bit in his rage. Meanwhile, the two hussars were hitting me all over, chiefly on the head. In a few seconds my shako, my wallet, and my pelisse were in strips, though I was not myself wounded by any of their blows. At length, however, the elder of the two hussars, a grizzled old soldier, let me have more than an inch of his point in my right side. I replied with a vigorous backhander; my blade struck his teeth and passed between his jaws, as he was in the act of shouting, slitting his mouth to the ears. He made off promptly, to my lively satisfaction, for he was by far the braver and more energetic of the two. When the younger man found himself left alone with me, he hesitated for a moment, because as our horses' heads were touching, he saw that to turn his back to me was to expose himself to be hit. However, on seeing several soldiers coming to my aid, he made up his mind, but he did not escape the dreaded wound, for in my anger I pursued him for some paces and gave him a thrust in the shoulder, which quickened his speed. During this fight, which lasted less time than it has taken to tell it, our scouts had come up quickly to set me free, and on the other side the English soldiers had marched towards the place where their officer had fallen. The two groups

were firing at each other, and I was very near getting in the way of the bullets from both sides. But my brother and Ligniville, who had seen me engaged with the English officer and his two men, had hastened up to me, and I was badly in want of their help, for I was losing so much blood from the wound in my side that I was growing faint, and I could not have stayed on my horse if they had not held me up. As soon as I rejoined the staff, Masséna said, taking my hand, "Well done; rather too well done! A field officer has no business to expose himself in fighting at the outposts." He was quite right, but when I told him the motives which had led me on, he blamed me less, and the more fiery Ney, remembering his own hussar days, cried, "Upon my word, in Marbot's place I should have done the same!" All the generals and my comrades came to express their concern, while Dr. Brisset was attending to me. The wound in my cheek was not important; in a month's time it had healed over, and you can scarcely see the mark of it along my left whisker. But the thrust in my right side was dangerous, especially in the middle of a long retreat, in which I was compelled to travel on horseback, without being able to get the rest which a wounded man needs.

As I said, at the moment when I was sent in search of Ney, the French army was drawn up in its position, commanding Miranda de Corvo, expecting an attack. However, Wellington, deterred no doubt by his losses on the previous days, checked the march of his troops, and Masséna, seeing this, determined under cover of the approaching night to pass through the town and long defile of Miranda.

On the morning of the 15th the army reached the banks of the Ceira, opposite Foz de Arunce, a small town on a hill commanding the river and the level ground on the left bank. On the 17th we crossed the Alva at Ponte Murcelha, and marched for five days, reaching Celorico unmolested.

The valley between the Mondego and the Estrella is exceedingly fertile, and we lived in comfort. Thus, on finding ourselves again at Celorico, whence Masséna had had the unlucky idea of turning aside from this fertile region on our outward march, and taking to the mountain district of Busaco, the army blamed him afresh, feeling that his mistake had cost many thousands of lives, and brought the campaign to failure. The marshal now—unable to make up his mind to re-enter Spain—resolved to hold his ground at any cost in Portugal. Masséna having communicated his plan to his lieutenants at Celorico, Marshal Ney, who was

burning with desire to recover his independence, opposed the idea of a new campaign, declaring that he was going to take his troops back to Spain, because they could no longer get any bread in Portugal. This was true, but the army had been accustomed to live without bread for the last six months, each soldier receiving several pounds of meat and plenty of wine. This fresh disobedience on Ney's part roused Masséna's wrath, and he replied by a general order, removing Marshal Ney from the command of the 6th corps. This act of vigour, just and necessary as it was, had been too long delayed; he should have done it at the first sign of insubordination. Ney at first refused to go away, saying that as the Emperor had given him the command of the 6th corps he should not resign it but by his direction; but on the order being repeated, he returned to Spain, and thence went to Paris. The command of the 6th corps fell by right of seniority to General Loison. Ney's dismissal produced an impression upon the army which was all the stronger that the principal cause of it was known, and that, insisting on a return to Spain, he had expressed the general wish of the troops.

On the 24th, the army began to move back upon the Tagus, and occupied Guarda. Of all towns in the Peninsula, this is in the highest situation. Several men died from the cold, and my wound in the side became very painful. Here Masséna received several dispatches from Berthier, nearly all two months old; which shows what a mistake Napoleon had made in thinking that from Paris he could direct the movements of an army in Portugal. The dispatches reached Masséna at Guarda just when he was making arrangements to hold the upper Tagus; and instead of going on at once with his movement, he wasted some days in replying to these letters of two months ago. This delay was injurious to us, for the enemy took advantage of it to bring up his troops, and attack us at Guarda. We repulsed\* him here, and so in the other partial combats which Masséna sustained while awaiting the officers whom he had sent to Alcantara. On learning from their report that it would be impossible to feed the army in a country devoid of resources, Masséna's will had at last to yield before accumulated obstacles, aggravated by the opposition of the generals and the destitution of the troops: and it was decided to return to Spain. Still, however, the commander-in-chief

\*[So one has to render *repousser*; but, seeing that as a matter of fact the French were forced to evacuate Guarda, the words evidently do not correspond accurately in meaning]

delayed, and Wellington profited by a false move on the part of Reynier to attack him at Sabugal. The fight was undecisive; but we lost two or three hundred more men in a glorious but useless engagement.

Next day, April 1, the army crossed the frontier and encamped on Spanish territory. It still included more than 45,000 effectives, and had sent more than 10,000 sick and wounded to Rodrigo and Salamanca. We had entered Portugal with 60,000 combatants, besides the division of the 9th corps which had joined us. During this long campaign, therefore, we had lost about 10,000 men killed, dead of illness, and prisoners.

The army took post round Almeida, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Zamora. Masséna was thus in a most awkward position, for the two fortresses and the surrounding country were under the authority of Bessières, to whom the Emperor had entrusted the command of a new army called the "Northern," entirely composed of troops belong to the Young Guard. Hence arose a conflict of authority between the two marshals, Bessières wishing to keep all the supplies for his troops, while Masséna reasonably maintained that his army, which had endured so many hardships in Portugal, had a right to at least an equal share in the distribution of provisions. The Emperor usually so far-sighted, had not given any orders to meet the case of Masséna's army being forced to evacuate Portugal. Great perplexity, therefore, prevailed on the frontier, especially as to the defence of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida.

The order placing the Count of Erlon and his force under the command of Masséna came at length, three months too late. After cantoning his army between Rodrigo, Zamora, and Salamanca, the marshal, on April 9, fixed his head-quarters in the last-named town.

Rest and good care at Salamanca soon cured me; but my satisfaction at this was alloyed by a vexatious incident which caused me much trouble. My good friend Ligniville left us in consequence of a serious difference with Masséna. The marshal had entrusted him with the laborious duties of chief equerry, which he performed, I may say, quite voluntarily, and out of good-nature. Fond as he was of horses, he had much difficulty in feeding them in Spain and Portugal, but he made the best of it. It had been ascertained that, in order to convey all the utensils and baggage of the head-quarters, thirty mules were required, and Ligniville, before entering on the campaign, had proposed to

obtain them ; but Masséna, not wishing to bear the cost himself, had ordered the commissary-general to get them for him. He had these pack animals with him throughout. Now the Spaniards have a good habit of shaving their mules' backs, so that the hair may not work into lumps under the pack, and make them sore. The operation can only be done by experts, and is pretty costly. Masséna, therefore, proposed to Ligniville to make the Mayor of Salamanca pay the cost out of the local funds ; but Ligniville refused to be a party to what he thought an exaction, and a scene ensued. Finally my friend told the marshal that as he showed so little gratitude for his condescension in acting as equerry he would not only vacate the post, but offer his resignation, and rejoin the 18th Dragoons, to which he belonged. In vain did Masséna try every means to make him stay ; Ligniville, a calm but very determined man, was inflexible, and fixed the day for his departure. Major Pelet being away on service, I was doing the duty of senior aide-de-camp, and in that capacity I assembled all the staff-officers, and proposed that we should show our esteem for our good comrade by riding with him a league from the town. My suggestion was accepted, and in order that Prosper Masséna should not seem to be finding fault with his father, we were careful to tell him off to remain in the ante-room while we escorted Ligniville. Our farewell was cordial, for we all liked him. Though our action was perfectly honourable, Masséna was angry at it, and accused me of instigating it ; and from that time his grudge against me revived, though my behaviour during the campaign had restored his confidence and interest in me.

Meanwhile the garrison of Almeida, invested by the English, and almost out of provisions, was on the point of surrendering, and the Emperor, in order to deprive the English of this triumph, had ordered Masséna to march his whole forces to the place and blow up the ramparts. But this operation had, as I have said, now become a very delicate one, since a considerable force was blockading Almeida and we should have to fight a battle. There was another not less serious difficulty. Masséna's army, distributed through the province of Salamanca, was not exactly living in the arms of plenty. Still every cantonment could supply the small body quartered in it, while if we were to march on the English, we must concentrate our troops and provide supplies which we had no sufficient means of storing or transporting.

As governor of the province, Marshal Bessières could dispose of all its resources, but he reserved them for the regiments of

the guard. He had plenty of cavalry and a formidable artillery, while Masséna, though his infantry was still respectable, was short of horses. He therefore asked Bessières to lend him some, and all the letters which he received from him abounded in the most encouraging protestations. As, however, they remained without result, and Almeida was known to be at the last gasp, Masséna no longer contented himself with writing to his colleague, whose head-quarters were at Valladolid, but resolved to send an aide-de-camp, who could explain the gravity of the position, and press him to send support. The commander-in-chief selected me to discharge this duty. Having been severely wounded on March 14, I was, five weeks later, not exactly in condition to ride post-haste over roads covered with guerillas. In any other circumstances I should have remarked as much to the marshal, but as he was cross with me, and as I had, through excessive zeal, asked leave to resume my duties (not expecting to have such a severe job in the course of the next few days) I did not care to throw myself on Masséna's pity, so I started in spite of the remonstrances of my comrades and my brother, who offered to take my place. In order to perform the duty I had to gallop the whole way on post horses; the wound in my side reopened and caused me much pain; still I reached Valladolid. Marshal Bessières, to prove outright that he cherished no grudge against me in regard to the quarrel between Marshal Lannes and himself on the battlefield of Essling, in which I was so innocently involved, received me very kindly. Complying with Masséna's reiterated request, he promised to send several regiments and three batteries of field artillery as well as abundant provisions. In such haste was I to report this good news to Masséna that I started back after a few hours' rest. Satisfied as he was with the result of my mission, he did not say a single good-natured word about the zeal which I had shown. It must be admitted that the many annoyances which he had all around him did a good deal to embitter his naturally vindictive temper.

Meanwhile Bessières' promised reinforcements not having arrived by the 21st, Masséna, reckoning only on his own resources to make his way to Almeida, concentrated his army on the 26th at Ciudad Rodrigo. But in order to feed the assembled forces, it was necessary to draw upon the supplies of Rodrigo, and thus compromise the future fate of that important place.

Great was the joy of our soldiers, who, though they had lived some days on half-rations of bread and less of meat, were yet

eager to fight, when, on the morning of the 2nd, they saw a weak column of Marshal Bessières' troops approaching, and took it for an advance-guard. But the reinforcement so pompously announced, and so long awaited, was confined to 1,500 cavalry, 6 guns, and 30 good teams. Bessières was bringing neither ammunition nor provisions. It was a regular hoax. Masséna was horrified, but very soon grew angry at seeing that Bessières was himself in command of this feeble succour. Indeed, the presence of that marshal was calculated to annoy him. The Army of Portugal was, it is true, in a province subject to the jurisdiction of Bessières, but it was independent of him, and solely under Masséna's orders, nor was there any reason, because Bessières was lending a few soldiers, that he should come in person to control in some measure his colleague's actions. Masséna understood this, and said to us, "He would have done much better to have sent me a few more thousand men with ammunition and provisions, and to have remained at the centre of his province than to come examining and criticizing what I am going to do." Bessières was therefore very coldly received, but this did not hinder him from following Masséna during the short campaign and giving him his advice. The army started on the afternoon of May 2, and hostilities began the next day.\*

Scarcely was the French army in quarters where it could rest and recruit, than Masséna began to think of reorganizing it, with a view to a fresh campaign. The work was, however, barely set on foot, when Marshal Marmont arrived from Paris. Though he held his appointment to the command-in-chief, he presented himself at first as Ney's successor in the command of the 6th corps; then a few days later, when he was sufficiently acquainted with the state of affairs, he produced his commission, and handed to Masséna the Emperor's order recalling him to Paris. This unforeseen disgrace, announced in such a way as to indicate that the Emperor did not approve his conduct of the operations, was a crushing blow to Masséna, but he was compelled to surrender the command to Marmont, and, taking leave of the army, he retired, in the first place, to Salamanca, after a very lively altercation with General Foy, whom he accused of having made common cause with Ney to do him a disservice with the Emperor.

But let us return for a moment to June, 1811, when Masséna

\*[In the original Marbot here gives a lengthy description of the battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro, largely based on Napier. It is therefore omitted from these pages.]



resigned his command. The war in the Peninsula was so disagreeable and so toilsome that every man longed to get back to France. The Emperor, knowing this, and wishing to keep his army up to its full strength, had decided that no officer was to leave Spain without special permission, and the order recalling Masséna authorized him to bring away only two aides-de-camp, and to leave the others at Marshal Marmont's disposal. He, having his staff complete, and knowing none of us, was no more anxious to keep us than we to stay with him. He assigned us no duties, and we passed some three weeks at Salamanca drearily enough. The time seemed, however, less long to me than to my companions, because I employed it in committing my recollections of the recent campaign to paper.

In consideration of my wound the minister at last sent me leave to return to France. Some others of Masséna's staff having also been permitted to leave the Peninsula, we joined a detachment of 500 grenadiers, who were on their way to reinforce the Imperial Guard. General Junot and his wife the duchess also took advantage of this escort. We travelled easily on horseback, with fine weather. On the journey some eccentric conduct on the part of Junot made me anxious as to his future.\* We reached the frontier, and forgetting past troubles, I hastened on to Paris, arriving in July, after an absence of fifteen toilsome months. Contrary to my expectation the marshal received me well, and I learnt that he had spoken very kindly of me to the Emperor. So on my first appearance at the Tuileries, the Emperor expressed his satisfaction with me, spoke with interest of Miranda de Corvo, and asked how many wounds I had now had. "Eight, sir," I answered. "Well, they are eight good quarterings of nobility for you," rejoined the Emperor.

## CHAPTER XXVII

*I SPENT* all the summer and autumn at Paris, passing some days of every month at the château of Bonneuil with M. and Mme. Desbrières. While I was away, this excellent family had shown great friendship for my mother, and before long I was permitted to pay my addresses to their daughter. Our marriage was arranged, and for a moment I hoped to obtain my promotion to colonel before the event took place.

\* [He committed suicide by leaping from a window in July, 1813]

According to etiquette the Emperor signed the marriage contracts of all his colonels, but he rarely paid this honour to officers of a lower rank ; if they wished for it they had to acquaint the Minister for War with their reasons. I based my application on the fact of the Emperor having said to me just before Marengo, and soon after my father's death, " If you behave well, and follow in his footsteps, it will be I who will act as your father." Since that day I had been eight times wounded, and was conscious of having always done my duty. Clarke, the minister, a rough man, who nearly always rejected such applications, admitted that mine deserved consideration, and promised to present it. In a few days I was ordered to present myself at Compiègne and bring the notary with the marriage contract. When we arrived, the Emperor was out coursing—not that he cared much for this exercise, but he rightly thought that he ought to imitate the old French kings. The matter had therefore to be put off till the next day, at which the notary, who had business in Paris, was much distressed ; but there was no help for it. Next day we were presented to the Emperor, and my marriage contract was signed in the room where, twenty years later, I was often on duty with the Orleans princes.

In these short interviews Napoleon was most affable. He asked several questions of the notary : inquired if the young lady was pretty, what was her dowry, and so on ; and when I took leave he said that he would like me to have a good post, and that he would, before long, reward me for my good service. Then I did think that I was as good as colonel ; and my hopes rose higher yet when, as I left the room, General Mouton, Count of Lobau, assured me that my name was on the list of field-officers who were to receive regiments, an assurance all the more welcome that the Count of Lobau was in charge of that department of the War Office which dealt with promotions. I returned to Paris, therefore, with a joyful heart, and was married on November 11.

Happy in the bosom of my family, I was daily awaiting my commission as colonel, when I was informed by the minister that I had been appointed as major to the 1st Mounted Chasseurs, then in garrison at the other end of Germany. This was a severe blow. As a major I had already been thrice wounded and served two campaigns, and it was hard to have to serve again with that rank, nor, after what the Emperor and the Count of Lobau had said, could I understand why I was thus treated. However, the latter soon explained it.

After the promotion of Pelet and Casabianca, I was the senior major on Masséna's staff. But M. Barain, the artillery captain, whom I have mentioned as having lost an arm at Wagram, and who, though he had been promoted to major with a view to his service in the arsenals, had insisted on accompanying Masséna to Portugal, possessed a relative whose influence with the marshal was considerable. Through his intervention Masséna was persuaded to recommend Barain for promotion, and the Emperor, yielding with some hesitation to the same influence, made him colonel.

From Masséna I received the following letter, as my sole reward for three campaigns served under him and three wounds received :

PARIS, *November 24, 1811*

MY DEAR MARBOT,—I forward your commission, which has been sent to me. As you know, I asked for your promotion ; and it is a matter of twofold regret to me that I failed to obtain it, and that I am losing your services. I appreciate them highly, and, so far as you are concerned, they are independent of the rewards which they entitle you to claim, and will always earn you the esteem of those under whom you may happen to serve. You may be sure of mine, and equally sure of my regret and my sincere attachment.

MASSÉNA.

I did not expect to see him again ; but the *maréchale*, wishing, as she wrote, to make my wife's acquaintance, invited us to dinner. Of her I have nothing but good to say, ever since I met her at Antibes, her native place, on my way back from Genoa ; so I accepted. Masséna came up to me with fresh expressions of regret, and proposed that he should apply for my nomination as officer of the Legion of Honour. I replied that, as he could do nothing for me when I was on his staff, I would not trouble him further, and would try to secure my promotion for myself ; and so slipped off into the crowd of guests. I never met the marshal again, though I continued to visit his wife and son, who were both my very good friends.

I began the year 1812 at Paris with my wife and our respective families ; but my happiness was disturbed by the thought of my approaching departure to join the first regiment of chasseurs, to which I had been appointed as major only. My regret at not having obtained promotion to colonel was somewhat lessened

when I was paying my respects on New Year's Day at the Tuileries, and the Emperor sent for me to his private room. I found there Count Lobau, who, in this matter, as always, did me much kindness. Napoleon appeared, and was very affable, saying that he had intended to give me a regiment, that personal considerations had induced him to make Barain a colonel, which with Pelet and Casabianca made three colonels from Masséna's staff, and he did not think he ought to appoint a fourth. He added that, though he could not give me the nominal command of a regiment, he was going to give it me practically—that, namely, of the 23rd Mounted Chasseurs. The colonel, M. de la Nougarède, suffered so much from gout that he could scarcely ride. "But," continued the Emperor, "he is an excellent officer, and served his first campaigns valiantly with me; I have much liking and esteem for him, and as he has begged me to allow him to try another campaign, I do not wish to take his regiment from him. However, I understand that that fine regiment is in a somewhat ticklish state, so I am sending you as his coadjutor. You will be working in your own interest—for if the colonel's health improves I shall make him a general. Otherwise I shall put him in the gendarmerie, and in either case you will be colonel. So I repeat that you will be working in your own interest." This promise restored my hopes, and I was making ready to start for my new destination when my leave was prolonged till the end of March, a favour that was none the less agreeable because I had not asked for it.

The 23rd Chasseurs was then in Swedish Pomerania, and, wishing to join before the end of my leave, I left Paris on March 15. I gave a place in my carriage to M. Durbach, nephew of Marshal Mortier, a lieutenant in the same regiment. My old servant, Woirland, had asked leave to stay in Spain, hoping to make his fortune in a canteen, and I had replaced him when I left Salamanca by a Pole named Lorenz Schilkowski. He had been an Austrian Uhlan and was not lacking in wits, but was a drunkard like all the Poles, and, unlike the soldiers of that nation, as cowardly as a hare. But, besides his native tongue, Lorenz spoke French a little, German and Russian perfectly, and in these respects was exceedingly valuable to me for a war in the north.

As we were starting at night from the post-house of Kaiserslautern, the postilion upset my carriage into a quagmire, and it was broken. Nobody was hurt, but M. Durbach and I both said, "A bad omen for soldiers who will soon be in presence of the enemy." However, after a day spent in repairing damages,

we were able to proceed, but the springs and wheels were so much injured that they broke six times during the journey, causing us much delay, and making us do several leagues on foot in the snow. At length we reached the shores of the Baltic, and found the 23rd Chasseurs in garrison at Stralsund and Greifswald.

I found Colonel de la Nougarède an excellent man, cultivated and capable, but so prematurely aged by gout that he had to travel constantly in a carriage—a melancholy way for the commander of a light cavalry regiment to move. He received me most kindly, and after explaining to me his reasons for remaining with the regiment, he showed me a letter in which Count Lobau informed him of the reasons which led the Emperor to place me with him. So far from being hurt by this, he regarded it as an additional kindness on the Emperor's part, and as holding out hopes that he would soon be appointed general, or commander of gendarmerie. He expected, with my help, to be able at least to take some part in the campaign, and obtain what he desired at the first review held by the Emperor. Therefore, to associate me in the command more than my position as senior major would naturally imply, he assembled the officers, and in their presence delegated his powers provisionally to me, bidding each obey me without reference to him, since his weak health often made it impossible for him to keep sufficiently near the regiment for him to command it in person. A general order to this effect was drawn up, and from that day I became in everything but rank a regimental commander, and the regiment soon became accustomed to regard me as its actual commander. Since that time I have commanded army cavalry regiments, either as colonel or as a general officer, and I have been for a long time inspector of that arm; but I can safely say that, if I ever saw a regiment in as good condition as the 23rd Chasseurs, I never saw a better. It was not that it contained men of surpassing merit, such as I have occasionally known in other regiments, but if there was no man in the 23rd of extraordinary ability, there was not one who was not thoroughly up to his duty. All were on the same level of courage and zeal: there was no weak spot. The officers, highly intelligent and sufficiently well trained, were all of excellent character, and lived together as true brethren in arms. It was the same with the non-commissioned officers, and the troopers followed their good example. Nearly all were veterans of Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland, and Wagram, and most had three, or at least two, good-conduct stripes; those who had only one were a

small minority. They were a splendid lot of men from Normandy, Alsace, Lorraine, and Franche-Comté, provinces well known for military spirit and love of horses. General Bourcier, when charged with the general remounting, had been so struck with the stature of the men that he had given them larger and stouter horses than the chasseurs usually have, so that this regiment was called the carbiniers of the light cavalry. Their long stay in Germany had brought men and horses into perfect condition; and when I took the command of the regiment it had an effective strength of over 1,000 fighting men, well-disciplined, calm, and able to hold their own, especially in presence of the enemy.

I got my horses from the island of Rugen, where there is a good breed, and from Rostock, seven in all. This was none too many, for war with Russia was clearly imminent. I had foreseen it since the summer of 1811, when I noticed how the Emperor was withdrawing men from the Peninsula to reinforce his Guard, and while staying in Paris my convictions of it had been strengthened. Rumours of strained relations—vanishing during the diversions of the winter, but always reviving in a more definite form—finally grew stronger, till they reached the point of certainty.

It is at this point I might mention that General Lauriston, our ambassador at St. Petersburg, was buying, not only the most accurate information about the position and strength of the Russian army, but also the engraved copperplates from which the great map of the Russian Empire had been printed. In spite of the vast difficulties in the transport of this heavy mass of metal, the treason was so well arranged, and so handsomely paid for, that these plates were abstracted from the archives of the Russian Government and carried into France without their disappearance being discovered, either by the police or by the customs officials. As soon as the plates reached Paris, the War Office, after substituting French for Russian characters in the names of places and rivers, had this fine map printed, and the Emperor ordered a copy to be sent to all the generals and commanders of light cavalry regiments. Thus I received one, which I succeeded, with some difficulty, in saving during the retreat, as it forms a large roll. The map contained all Russia; even Siberia and Kamschatka, which considerably amused those who received it. Very few brought theirs back, but I have got mine.

Leaving Dresden on July 29,\* the Emperor went towards Poland, by way of Danzig and Prussia Proper. His troops were

\* [So in the original, but July is obviously an error for May.]

crossing this country at the same time, and he reviewed them as he came up with them. The 23rd Mounted Chasseurs was brigaded with the 24th. This brigade, commanded by General Castex, formed part of the 2nd army corps, under Marshal Oudinot. I had known General Castex for some time; he was an excellent man, and I got on perfectly with him throughout the campaign. Marshal Oudinot had seen me at the siege of Genoa, as well as in Austria, in 1809, and he treated me with much kindness. On June 20 the 2nd corps was ordered to halt at Insterburg, to be reviewed by the Emperor. These military solemnities were always awaited with impatience by those persons who hoped to share in the favours which Napoleon distributed on such occasions. I was of the number, believing myself all the more certain to be appointed colonel of the regiment that, besides the promises which the Emperor had made to me, General Castex and Marshal Oudinot had told me that they were going to recommend me officially, and that they believed that M. de la Nougarède was going to be placed, with the rank of general, at the head of one of the grand remount dépôts which would be established in rear of the army. But the same fatality which had so frequently postponed the delivery of my commission as major pursued me afresh in obtaining that of colonel. The reviews involved severe examinations by the Emperor of the regimental commanders, especially on the eve of a campaign. Besides the usual questions as to the numerical strength in men and horses, he used to address a heap of unexpected queries which people were not always prepared to answer. For instance, "How many men have you had from such a department in the last two years? How many carbines from Tulle or from Charleville? How many Norman horses have you? How many Breton? How many German? How many men of that troop have got three stripes? How many two, or one? What is the average age of your soldiers? Of your officers? Of your horses?" and so on. These questions, always put in a short, imperative tone, accompanied with a piercing glance, put many colonels out of countenance; and yet woe to him who hesitated to answer: he got a bad mark in Napoleon's mind. I had prepared myself so well that I had an answer for everything, and the Emperor, after complimenting me on the fine condition of the regiment, would probably have named me colonel, and promoted M. de la Nougarède general. But just then the latter, with his legs wrapped in flannel, had got hoisted on his horse, to follow the

movements of his regiment at a distance, while I commanded in his place. Hearing his name, he came up to Napoleon and irritated him by an untimely request on behalf of an officer, a relation of his, who was unworthy of any interest. This request raised a storm of which I experienced the recoil. Napoleon flew into a violent rage, ordered the gendarmes to expel the officer in question from the army, and galloped away, leaving La Nougarede confounded : so he was not made general. Marshal Oudinot having followed the Emperor to inquire his orders with regard to the 23rd Chasseurs, his Majesty replied, " Let Major Marbot continue to command it." Before I obtained colonel's rank I was to be wounded again, and that severely.

To do M. de la Nougarede justice, I must say that he expressed in the frankest manner his regret at having been the involuntary cause of the delay in my promotion. I was much concerned by the worthy man's awkward position ; he feared that he had lost the Emperor's confidence, and at the same time his infirmity prevented him from recovering it by good conduct in battle.

I had been fortunate enough on the review day to obtain all the promotions and decorations which I had asked for on behalf of my officers and men ; and, as the gratitude of these favours always falls upon the commander who has secured them, my influence in the regiment increased considerably, and mitigated my regret at not having been promoted to the rank of which I was discharging the functions. At this time I received letters from Marshal Masséna and the maréchale, the former commending to me M. Renique, the latter her son Prosper. I was touched by this attention, and accepted both as captains in my regiment ; but Prosper Masséna never came to Russia ; nor could he, indeed, have borne the climate.

We were now close upon the Russian frontier, and once more about to see the Niemen, which had been our limit in 1807. The army was arranged in the following order. The Austrians, under Schwarzenburg, on the extreme right ; to his left between Biellostock and Grodno, two army corps under King Jerome, and next to them Eugène Beauharnais ; the centre faced Kowno, consisting of 220,000 combatants, under Murat, Ney, Oudinot, Lefebvre, and Bessières ; the Emperor being with it in person. Macdonald, with 35,000 Prussians, formed, as I have said, the left wing at Tilsit. Behind the Niemen was the Russian army, 400,000 strong, commanded by the Emperor Alexander, or rather by



Bennigsen. It was divided into three principal corps under Bagration, Barclay de Tolly, and Wittgenstein.

On June 23, wearing the cap and cloak of a Pole in his guard, Napoleon examined the banks of the Niemen ; and that evening at 10 p.m. ordered the passage to begin. Three bridges of boats had been thrown across opposite Kowno, and our troops occupied that town without resistance.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

*WHEN THE* sun rose on June 24, we witnessed a most imposing spectacle. On the highest point near the left bank were seen the Emperor's tents. Around them, the slopes of every hill and the valleys between were gay with men and horses flashing with arms. This mass of 250,000 combatants was rolling on in three large columns with the most perfect regularity towards the three bridges which crossed the river, and over which the various corps were proceeding to the right bank, each to advance in the direction prescribed to it. On the same day our troops crossed the Niemen at other points, near Grodno, Pilyon and Tilsit.

From a "state" furnished to me by General Gourgaud, and scored all over with notes in Napoleon's hand, it appears that the army which crossed the Niemen amounted to 325,000 men actually present, of whom 155,000 were French ; and 984 guns. The 2nd corps, of which my regiment formed part, crossed by the first bridge and marched direct for Janowo. It was intensely hot, and towards night a heavy storm came on, with floods of rain. The army did not, however, as has been stated, regard this as a bad omen ; soldiers are well used to hail and thunder in summer time. Moreover, the Russians had also their bad omen, for on the same night the Emperor Alexander nearly lost his life during a ball at Wilna, by the floor of a room giving way under his chair, just at the time when the first French detachment was landing on Russian soil. However, the storm made the weather very cold, and our horses, who had to eat wet grass and sleep on muddy ground, suffered a good deal. We also lost some thousands of men from acute colic.

Meanwhile the Russians were retiring, and the French army soon occupied Wilna, the capital of Lithuania. Near this town a cavalry action took place, in which Octave de Ségur, elder

brother of the general and historian, was captured when leading a squadron of the 8th Hussars. On the day when the Emperor entered Wilna, Marshal Oudinot's troops encountered the Russian corps under Wittgenstein at Wilkomir, and the first serious engagement of the campaign took place. I had never served under Oudinot, and this beginning confirmed my high opinion of his courage, but still further reduced that which I held of his military talents.

One of the chief faults of the French in time of war is to pass without reason from the most minute caution to unbounded confidence. Thus the Russians having let us cross the Niemen and occupy Wilna unopposed, it became the thing among some officers to say that the enemy would always run away, and nowhere make a stand. Oudinot's staff, and the marshal himself, often vented this opinion, and treated the reports of the peasants as to a great Russian force posted before the little town of Wilkomir as fables. This incredulity was very near being the ruin of us in this wise. Light cavalry, being the eyes of an army, usually marches in front and on the flank. My regiment then was a short league in advance of the infantry divisions, when, on getting near Wilkomir, without having seen a single enemy's picket I found myself in front of a forest of mighty pines, among which cavalry could easily move in sections, while the branches masked all distant view. Fearing an ambush, I halted the regiment, and sent a single squadron forward to reconnoitre. In a quarter of an hour the captain in command, a very intelligent man, returned with the news that the enemy was present in force. Hastening to the extreme edge of the forest I saw, a cannon-shot away, the town of Wilkomir, covered by a stream and a hill upon which were drawn up in line 25,000 to 30,000 infantry, with cavalry and artillery. It may seem strange that these troops had thrown out neither grand guards, nor pickets, nor scouts; but when the Russians mean to defend a strong position their way is to let the enemy approach as near as possible without any warning from the fire of skirmishers of the resistance with which he is to meet; and not till his masses are within easy range do they open with artillery and musketry, so as to bewilder and throw into confusion the enemy's soldiers. This plan, which perhaps offers advantages, has often resulted well for the Russians; so Wittgenstein was preparing a reception of this sort for us.

Matters seemed to me so serious that, without showing my regiment, I withdrew it into the forest, and hastened off myself

to warn Marshal Oudinot of the state of affairs. I found him outside the wood, having dismounted and halted his troops, quietly breakfasting in the middle of his staff. I expected that my report would draw him from his false security; but he received me with an incredulous air, and said, patting my shoulder: "Oh, come! here has Marbot just found 30,000 men for us to drub!" General Laurencez, his son-in-law and chief of staff, was the only one who believed; he had formerly been aide-de-camp to Augereau and knew me of old. So he took my part, remarking that when the commander of a regiment says, "I have seen——" he ought to be believed; and that to neglect the warnings of light cavalry officers was to run a great risk. This made the marshal reflect, and he was beginning to ask me further questions about the enemy, of whose presence he still seemed to have doubts, when a captain of his staff, M. Duplessis, came up all out of breath, to say that he had been all over the place, and even into the forest, and had not seen a single Russian. Hearing this, the marshal and his staff fell to laughing at my fears, much to my vexation. I contained myself, however, knowing that the truth would soon appear.

Breakfast ended, the march was resumed, and I returned to my regiment at the head of the column. As before, I took it through the wood, for I foresaw what would happen as soon as we emerged in front of the enemy's position. In spite of all I could say Oudinot insisted on following a very broad road cut straight through the forest; but no sooner had he got near the edge of it than the enemy, perceiving the numerous group formed by the staff, opened a rolling fire from their guns, which were placed facing the road so as to enfilade it. The gilded squadron, lately so cheerful, was thrown into disorder. Happily, no man was touched by the balls, but the marshal's horse was killed, as well as those of M. Duplessis and several others. I was well revenged, and to my shame I admit that I found it hard to conceal the satisfaction which I felt at seeing all those who had laughed at my report and treated what I had said about the enemy's presence as mere fancy, running in all directions under a storm of shot and jumping the ditches with all their might to take shelter behind the great pines. Good General Laurencez, whom I had advised to remain in the forest, laughed heartily at the scene. I must do Marshal Oudinot the justice of saying that he was hardly on horseback again when he came to express his regret to me for what had happened at breakfast, and begged me to give him

information as to the position of the Russians, and point out the ways by which he could bring his infantry columns through the forest without exposing them too much to artillery fire. Several officers of the 23rd, who had explored the wood with me in the morning, were bidden to guide the divisions. These were received on emerging with a terrible cannonade which might have been avoided if, warned as we were of the presence of the Russians, we had manœuvred to turn their flank instead of marching straight on their front. Once out of the wood, I was thus compelled to attack the position by the best defended point, and to take the bull by the horns.

At all events, our brave troops attacked the enemy with resolution, and drove him back on all sides, until after two hours' fighting he effected a retreat. This he did not do without danger, for to accomplish it he had to pass through the town and cross a bridge over a stream with steep banks. The operation, always a difficult one when it has to be done fighting, was begun in good order; but our field artillery having come into position on a height commanding the town, its fire soon carried disorder into the enemy's masses, and they fled headlong towards the bridge. After crossing, instead of re-forming their ranks we could see them flying in a crowd over the plains on the opposite bank, their retreat soon turning to a rout. The Toula regiment alone still held its ground at the end of the bridge towards the town. Marshal Oudinot was most anxious to force this passage and complete his victory over the flying troops; but as our infantry columns had barely reached the suburbs, it would take them at least a quarter of an hour to come up before the bridge, and every moment was precious. My regiment, having made a successful charge at the entrance of the town, was now assembled on the promenade not far from the stream. The marshal sent word to me to bring it up at a gallop, and as soon as we reached him he ordered me to charge the battalions which were covering the bridge, cross it, and at once pursue the fugitives on the plain. Experienced soldiers know how hard it is for cavalry to break a brave infantry which defends itself with resolution in the streets of a town. I understood in their full extent the dangers of my task; but it was necessary to obey at once, and, besides, I knew that a regimental commander makes a favourable impression or otherwise on his troops by his conduct in the first fights. My regiment was composed of brave soldiers. I brought them along at a gallop and charged the Russian grenadiers at their head.

They received us bravely with the bayonet ; but so impetuous was our rush that they were nevertheless broken at the first shock. Having once pierced the enemy's ranks, my chasseurs, dexterously using their points, did fearful execution. The enemy retired across the bridge, we following so closely that they tried in vain to re-form ; they could not succeed in doing so, our troopers being mixed up with them and killing all whom they could reach. The Russian colonel fell dead, and his regiment, losing heart at the loss of their commander, and seeing the French light infantry already at the bridge, laid down their arms. I lost six men killed and about a score wounded, while we captured a colour and 2,000 prisoners.

After the fight I hastened on with my people into the plain, where we took a great number of fugitives, many horses, and several guns. Marshal Oudinot, who had seen the whole affair from the town, came to compliment the regiment. From this day he had a special predilection for it, which it deserved in all respects. I was proud to command such soldiers, and when the marshal informed me that he intended to ask for a colonelcy for me, I was quite afraid lest the Emperor might renounce his first intention and give me the first vacant regiment. Things fall out strangely. The action at Wilkomir, where the 23rd covered itself with glory, very nearly became the cause of its destruction later on, because the courage which it had shown on that occasion caused it to be selected for an impracticable operation, of which I shall presently speak.

At our very first entry into Russia the enemy had committed the huge blunder of allowing Napoleon to break their line, with the result that the main body of their troops, led by the Emperor Alexander and Barclay, had been thrown back to the Dwina, while the remainder, under Bagration, was eighty leagues distant, near Mir, on the Upper Niemen. Bagration's plan was to rejoin the Emperor by way of Minsk ; but Davout, who was guarding that important point, drove him back upon Bobrinsk, where he knew that Jerome Bonaparte with 60,000 men ought to be on the look-out. Nothing but the bungling of Jerome, who had not only misunderstood the instructions of Davout, but also, refusing to recognize the right to command which long and successful experience had given to the marshal, wished to act on his own judgment, saved Bagration from having to surrender. Even so, Davout, following him with his wonted temerity, overtook him on the road to Mohileff, and although he had at

the moment only 12,000 men, attacked and beat his force of 36,000.

The capture of Bagration's corps would have had immense results for Napoleon, and his anger against King Jerome for having let him escape was terrible. He ordered him to leave the army on the spot and return to Westphalia. This severe if unavoidable measure produced in the army an effect unfavourable to King Jerome; but was he really most to blame? His chief fault was having thought that his dignity as sovereign was inconsistent with taking instructions from a marshal; but the Emperor, who knew quite well that the young prince had never in his life set a battalion in the field, nor taken part in the very smallest action, was surely to blame for allowing him to make his start with an army of 60,000 men, and that in such serious circumstances. General Junot replaced Jerome, and it was not long before he too committed an irreparable blunder.

On July 15, the columns under Muiat, Ney, Montbrun, Nansouty, and Oudinot had reached the Dwina. The last-named, probably misunderstanding the Emperor's orders, made an erratic march, and, descending the Dwina by the left bank, while Wittgenstein's corps was going up it on the opposite side, he appeared before the town of Dunaborg. The fortifications were old and bad, and he hoped to carry the bridge, cross the river, and attack Wittgenstein in rear. But Wittgenstein on leaving Dunaborg had left there a strong garrison, with plenty of artillery. My regiment was, as usual, with the advanced guard, which Oudinot was that day leading in person. Dunaborg stands on the right bank, and as we came up on the left bank we found it defended by a considerable work which acts as a *tête de pont* to the bridge, which connects the place itself with its outworks beyond the river, here very broad. A quarter of a league from the fortifications, on which Oudinot averred that there were no guns, I espied a Russian battalion, with its left resting on the river, and its front covered by the huts of an abandoned camp—a position in which it was very difficult to get at the enemy. The marshal, however, told me to attack them; and, leaving the task of avoiding the huts and passing through the intervals between them to the intelligence of my officers, I gave the word to charge. But hardly had the regiment advanced a few paces, amid a hail of bullets from the Russian infantry, when the artillery, whose existence the marshal had denied, began to thunder from the fortifications. So close were we that the shrapnel passed over

our heads before it had time to burst. One of the few round-shot which came with it passed through a fisherman's house, and broke the leg of one of my best trumpeters, who was sounding the charge beside me. I lost several men at this point.

Marshal Oudinot, who had made the serious mistake of attacking a camp of huts protected by cannon and musketry, hoped to dislodge the enemy's infantry by sending a Portuguese battalion against them; but these foreigners, old prisoners of war who had been enlisted in France rather unwillingly, did not face the fire with any energy, and we were still exposed. Perceiving that Oudinot was maintaining his position under the enemy's bullets bravely enough, but without giving any orders, I saw that if this state of things lasted a few minutes longer my regiment would be destroyed. So I ordered my chasseurs to open out and charge the Russian infantry in loose order, which had the advantage both of making them give way and of stopping the artillery fire, the gunners being afraid of hitting their own men. Under the sabres of my troopers the defenders of the camp fled in disorder towards the *tête de pont*; but the garrison entrusted with the defence of that work consisted of newly-enlisted soldiers, who, fearing to see us enter with their comrades, closed the gates in a hurry, compelling the fugitives to make for the bridge of boats in order to reach the other bank and take shelter in the town. This bridge had no rail, the boats were unsteady, the river wide and deep, and on the other side I saw the garrison making ready to close the gates. To advance farther seemed to me madness, so, thinking that the regiment had done enough, I halted it. Just then the marshal came up, crying "Brave 231d ! do as you did at Wilkomir : cross the bridge, force the gates, and capture the town." In vain did General Laurencez try to make him see that the difficulty here was much greater, and that a cavalry regiment could not attack a fortress, however badly guarded, if to get there it had to cross a bad bridge of boats two abreast. The marshal was obstinate. He said they would profit by the enemy's disorder and fright, and ordered me afresh to march on the town. I obeyed; but I had scarcely reached the first compartment of the bridge with my leading section, at the head of which I had felt bound in honour to place myself, when the garrison, having succeeded in closing the gate towards the river, appeared on the top of the ramparts and opened fire upon us. The narrow front which we presented offering but a small mark to unpractised soldiers, the fire caused us much less loss than I should have expected. But

when the defenders of the *tête de pont* heard the fortress firing on us, they recovered from their scare and began themselves to take a hand in the game. Seeing the 23rd thus placed between two fires, and unable to advance beyond the near end of the shaky bridge, Marshal Oudinot sent me the order to retire. The wide spaces I had left between my sections allowed them to wheel round without too much disorder, yet two men and their horses fell into the river and were drowned. To regain the left bank we had to pass again under the ramparts of the *tête de pont*, and were again received with a rolling fire, which, very fortunately, proceeded from unskilful militiamen. If we had had to do with soldiers well accustomed to musketry practice the regiment must have been exterminated. As it was, this unlucky engagement, so imprudently brought about, cost us some thirty men killed and many wounded. One might at least have hoped that the marshal would rest content with this fruitless attempt, especially when, as I said before, he had no instructions from the Emperor to take Dünaborg; but when his infantry came up he ordered a fresh attack upon the *tête de pont*. The enemy had had time to strengthen the garrison of this, troops having hastened up from their cantonments at the sound of the cannon, and our men were repulsed with far heavier loss than the 23rd Chasseurs had suffered. Marshal Oudinot was blamed by the Emperor for this useless attempt.

Not long after this untoward event Oudinot received orders to go up the Dwina and rejoin Ney and Montbrun. His corps, taking the same route which the others had taken, came past the town of Druia. The marshal's plan was to encamp three leagues further on; but, fearing that the enemy might take advantage of the ford to attack his large baggage train, he decided that, while he with the army moved on, a regiment of Castex's brigade should pass the night, with orders to watch the ford, on the ground where Saint-Geniès had been surprised. My regiment was for duty that day, and the dangerous task of remaining opposite Druia alone fell to it. I knew that most of Wittgenstein's army had gone on up the river; but I could see that he had left near the ford two strong cavalry regiments—more than would be needed to beat me.

All my military experience had convinced me that the best means of defending a river against the attack of an enemy who does not wish to establish himself on your side of it, is to keep the bulk of your force at some distance from the stream; first,



in order to have timely warning of the enemy's passage ; and secondly, because, his purpose being only to strike suddenly and then retire quickly, he will not dare to go far from the bank by which his retreat is secured. So I established my regiment half a league from the Dwina, in a field where the ground was slightly undulating. I had left only a few double vedettes on the river bank, for I am convinced that, when it is only a question of watching, two men see just as well as a strong picket. Several lines of horsemen were posted between the vedettes and our bivouac, serving like the threads of a spider's web to bring me rapid intelligence of whatever passed on the ground which I had to watch. Furthermore, I had forbidden all fire, even pipe-lights, and enjoined perfect silence. In Russia July nights are very short ; however, this appeared to me very long, apprehensive as I was of being attacked in the darkness by a force stronger than my own. Half the men were in the saddle, the rest feeding their horses and ready to mount at the first signal. Everything appeared quiet on the opposite bank when Lorenz, my Polish servant, who spoke Russian perfectly, came and told me that he had heard an old Jewess in a neighbouring house say to another woman : " The lantern is lighted on the tower of Morki : they are going to attack." I sent for the women and questioned them through Lorenz, when they replied that, as they feared to see their hamlet become a battlefield, they had been alarmed at seeing the same light shining from the church of the village of Morki, on the opposite bank, which two nights before had been the signal for the Russian troops to cross the ford and charge upon the French camp. Although I was prepared for anything, this information was very useful to me. In an instant the regiment was mounted, swords were drawn, and the word was passed, in a low voice, for the vedettes on the river bank and the troopers who were posted across the plain to fall in. Two of the bravest non-commissioned officers, Prud'homme and Graft, went with Lieutenant Bertin to watch the movements of the enemy. In a few moments he came back, announcing that a column of Russian cavalry was crossing the ford, that several squadrons were already on the bank but that, surprised not to find our camp in the old place, they had halted, doubtless fearing to go too far from the ford. However, they had made up their minds, and were coming on at a walk, being by this time at no great distance from us. Instantly I ordered an immense hayrick and several barns to be set on fire ; the flames lighted up the whole country, and I could plainly see the enemy's column, consisting

of the Grodno Hussars. I had with me 1,000 brave troopers. With cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" we galloped upon the Russians who, surprised at so brisk and unexpected an attack, turned round and fled in disorder, sabred by the chasseurs, towards the ford over which they had come. There they found themselves face to face with a dragoon regiment, which, being brigaded with them, had followed them, and was only just coming out of the river. From the shock and confusion of the two regiments there resulted a fearful disorder, of which my men took advantage to kill a great number of the enemy and capture many horses. The Russians threw themselves in headlong tumult into the ford, and as, in order to escape the shots which my chasseurs were firing from the bank into the distracted crowd, they wanted all to cross at once, a good many were drowned. Our sudden attack in the plain had so astounded the enemy, who expected to catch us asleep, that not one stood on the defensive, but all fled without fighting; so that I had the pleasure of returning to my bivouac without having to lament the loss of one of my men. The dawning day lighted up our battlefield, where lay several hundred of the enemy, killed or wounded. I left them to the care of the inhabitants of the hamlet near which I had passed the night, and went on my way, rejoining Oudinot's corps that same evening. The marshal gave me a good reception, and complimented the regiment on its fine performance.

In three days the 2nd corps came opposite Polotsk. There we learnt that the Emperor had at last left Wilna after twenty days' stay, and was going towards Witebsk. On moving from Wilna the Emperor left the Duke of Bassano there in the capacity of governor of Lithuania, and General Hogendorf as military commander. Neither of these two officials was fitted to organize the communications of an army; for the Duke of Bassano an old diplomat and careful secretary, knew nothing of administration; while Hogendorf, a Dutchman, who could hardly speak our language, and had no idea of our military customs and regulations, could not get on with the French who passed through Wilna, or with the local nobility. Thus the wealth of Lithuania was of no assistance to our troops.

Polotsk, on the right bank of the Dwina, consists of wooden houses, and is commanded by a magnificent college, kept at that time by Jesuits, who were nearly all Frenchmen. It is surrounded with earthworks, and sustained a siege in the wars of Charles XII. The corps of Ney, Murat, and Montbrun, on their way from Drissa

to Witebsk, had thrown a bridge of boats across the Dwina, opposite Polotsk, which they left for Oudinot's corps. Our destination was the St. Petersburg road, for at this point the 2nd corps took a direction different from that of the Grand Army; nor did we meet it again until the following winter at the passage of the Beresina.

It would take volumes to recount the manœuvres and combats of that part of the army which followed the Emperor to Moscow, so I shall confine myself to mentioning the most important events as I come to them. On July 25 there was an action near Ostrowno, very favourable to our infantry; but several cavalry regiments were brought into action by Murat too precipitately, among them the 16th Chasseurs. My brother, who was a major in that regiment, was captured and taken far beyond Moscow, to Sataroff, on the Volga, where he found Colonel Saint-Mars and Octave de Ségur. They helped each other mutually to support their wearisome captivity. My brother was already used to it, for he had passed several years in Spanish prisons and hulks. Our fortunes in war were very different; Adolphe, thrice taken prisoner, was never wounded; whereas I was wounded very often, but never captured.

While the Emperor, in possession of Wilna, was unsuccessfully manœuvring to force the Russian army to a decisive battle, Oudinot's corps, after crossing the Dwina at Polotsk, sat down before that town, having in front of it General Wittgenstein's troops, forming the enemy's right wing. Before recounting the incidents which took place on the banks of the Dwina I ought to say something of the composition of the 2nd corps. Marshal Oudinot had at first under his orders only 44,000 men, distributed among three infantry divisions, whose commanders were Generals Legrand, Verdier, and Merle, all three excellent officers, especially the first. Among the generals of brigade, Albert and Maison were conspicuous. The cavalry consisted of a superb division of cuirassiers and lancers, commanded by General Dumerc, a somewhat commonplace officer, having under him the brave Major-General Berckheim. There were also two brigades of light cavalry; the first, composed of the 23rd and 24th Chasseurs, was commanded by General Castex, an excellent soldier in all respects; the second, formed by the 7th and 20th Chasseurs and the 8th Polish Lancers, was under General Corbineau, a brave but indolent man. These two brigades were not formed into a division; the marshal attached them as they were wanted, now

to the infantry divisions, now to the advanced or to the rear guard—a system which had great advantages.

The 24th Chasseurs, with which my regiment was brigaded, was excellently constituted, and might have done great service if there had been a bond of sympathy between the soldiers and their commander. Unluckily, Colonel A—— was very harsh towards his subordinates, who, on their side, were not well disposed towards him. This state of things decided General Castex to march and camp with the 23rd, and to mess with me, although he had served in the 24th. Colonel A——, tall, active, always perfectly mounted, generally showed well in hand-to-hand combats, but was reputed to be less fond of musketry and artillery. With all his faults, the Emperor appreciated in him one quality, which he possessed in the highest degree: he was undoubtedly the best light cavalry officer in any European army. A finer tact or equal judgment in exploring a country with a glance was never seen. Before traversing a district he divined the obstacles which maps did not show, foresaw the points where streams, roads, or the smallest paths must come out, and could draw from the enemy's movements inferences which nearly always came true. Both in the details and in the general conception of war, he was a most remarkable officer. The Emperor, who in former campaigns had frequently employed him on reconnaissances, had brought him under the notice of Marshal Oudinot, by whom he was often called to counsel; the result of this being that many tasks and dangerous duties perforce fell to the share of my regiment.

## CHAPTER XXIX

*AS SOON* as the corps which had preceded us to Polotsk had gone on to join the Emperor at Witebsk, Oudinot massed all his troops in one huge column on the St. Petersburg road, and on July 29, marched against Wittgenstein, whom he knew to be in position ten leagues from us between two towns named Sebesch and Nevel. That night we slept on the banks of the Drissa, an affluent of the Dwina. At Sivoshina, where the high road to St. Petersburg crosses it, it is no more than a large brook. There was no bridge; but the Russian Government had had the lofty banks sloped away on both sides, and the bottom of the stream paved to a width equal to the road. There was thus a practicable

ford, but the bank was so steep on either hand that troops and wagons could not cross to right or left of it. This detail is necessary, because a few days later an active engagement took place there.

On the next day, my regiment being for duty, I took my place at the head of the advanced guard, and followed by the whole army corps, crossed the ford of the Drissa. The heat was most oppressive; in the dusty wheat on each side of the road could be seen two broad bands where the crushed and flattened straw, looking as if a roller had gone over it, marked the passage of large columns of infantry. Suddenly, close to the post-station of Kliastitsi, these tracks disappeared from the edge of the high road, and appeared again to the left on a broad cross-road ending at Jakobowo. It was evident that the enemy had at this point turned away from the direction of Sebesch to throw himself on our left flank. Matters seemed to me serious. I halted the troops and sent a message to my brigadier. But the marshal, who usually marched within sight of the advanced guard, noticing the halt, galloped up, and, in spite of all that Generals Castex and Laurencez could say, ordered me to keep on along the high road. I had hardly gone a league when I saw a kibitka, or Russian carriage, coming towards us, drawn by two post-horses. I stopped it, and found a Russian officer who had fallen asleep in the heat, and was lying at full length at the bottom of the carriage. He was a young man, son of the landowner to whom the station of Kliastitsi belonged, and aide-de-camp to General Wittgenstein, and was returning from St. Petersburg with an answer to dispatches sent by his general to the Government. His astonishment when he awoke with a start to find himself in the presence of our chasseurs with their forbidding countenances and saw close by a French army, cannot be described. He could not understand how he had failed to meet the army of Wittgenstein, or at any rate some of his scouts, between Sebesch and the point where we were, which only confirmed General Castex and me in our belief that Wittgenstein had been setting a trap for Oudinot by quitting abruptly the road to St. Petersburg in order to throw himself on the rear and left flank of our army, and in fact we soon heard the sound of cannon, and shortly after that of musketry. Marshal Oudinot, although surprised at so unforeseen an attack, got out of the fix pretty well. Ordering the various portions of his columns to left-face, he got them into line, and so vigorously repulsed Wittgenstein's first attack, that the Russian thought it best not

to try again that day, and retired behind Jakobowo. His cavalry, however, had a fair measure of success, for it captured in our rear a thousand men and part of the baggage, including our field forges. This was a serious loss, of which the cavalry of the 2nd corps was painfully conscious throughout the campaign. After this engagement Oudinot's troops took up their position, while Castex's brigade was ordered to march back as far as Kliastitsi and guard the point where the roads divided, General Maison's infantry presently joining us. The Russian officer, a prisoner in his own father's house, did the honours of it very gracefully.

Meanwhile, preparations were being made by the commanders on both sides for a serious engagement on the morrow, and at daybreak the Russians marched on the post-house of Kliastitsi, on which the French right rested. Although in such circumstances the whole brigade was employed, the regiment for duty formed the first line, and to-day it was the turn of the 24th. To avoid all delay, General Castex put himself at the head of the regiment, and led them at the Russian battalions, breaking them and taking 400 prisoners with very small loss. He was the first to enter the enemy's ranks. His horse was killed by a bayonet, and the general in his fall sprained his foot. It was several days before he could lead the brigade again, and Colonel A—— took the command. The Russian battalions which the 24th had cut up were at once replaced by others which debouched from Jakobowo, and advanced rapidly upon us. The marshal sent orders to M. A—— to attack them, and he gave the word for the second line to pass to the front, which I duly executed. As soon as the 23rd were re-formed in line we marched upon the Russian infantry, which halted and steadily awaited us ; it was the Tamboff regiment. When we were within striking distance I gave the word to charge. This was carried out all the more efficiently for the stimulus which the fact that their comrades of the 24th were watching them gave to my troopers. The enemy committed the serious blunder, as I think it, of spending all his fire at once, by giving us a volley, which, badly aimed as it was, emptied but few saddles. A file fire would have been far more destructive. Before the Russians could reload we were upon them at the full speed of our excellent horses, and the shock was so violent that they were overthrown in heaps. Many rose again and tried to defend themselves with the bayonet against the troopers' points ; but after losing heavily they fell back, and at last broke, many being killed or captured as they fled towards a cavalry regiment which was coming up to

their aid. It was the Grodno Hussars. Now I have observed that when one regiment has beaten another it always retains the superiority, and here I had a fresh proof of it, for the 23rd dashed at the Grodno Hussars, whom they had beaten so soundly in the night engagement at Druia, as at an easy prey; while the hussars, recognizing their conquerors, fled in all haste. Throughout the rest of the campaign this regiment was always meeting the 23rd, which steadily preserved the upper hand.

While these events were taking place on our right, the infantry of the centre and left had attacked the Russians, who, beaten all along the line, left the field of battle, and took up their position at nightfall a league away. Our army retained its ground between Jakobowo and the division of the roads at Kliastitsi. Great was the joy at our victory in the bivouacs of the brigade that evening.

My regiment had taken the colour of the Tamboff regiment, and the 24th that of the Russian regiment which it had broken; but its satisfaction was dashed by the fact that both its majors were wounded. The senior, M. Monginot, was in all respects an officer of the highest merit; the other was the colonel's brother, and, though he had not his abilities, was a most valiant officer. They both soon got well, and served throughout the campaign.

When a force tries to turn its enemy's flank it is liable itself to be turned. That was what happened to Wittgenstein, for, having, on the 29th, left the St. Petersburg road to fling himself on the left and rear of the French army, he had endangered his own line of communications; and if Oudinot had followed up his victory of the 30th with vigour, it might have been completely cut. The Russian general's position seemed still more hazardous when he learnt that Marshal Macdonald, having crossed the Dwina and taken Dunaborg, was advancing on his rear. To get out of this fix Wittgenstein had cleverly employed the whole night after the battle in making a detour across-country, bringing his army by Jakobowo back to the St. Petersburg road, beyond the post-station of Kliastitsi. Fearing, however, lest the French right, near which he must pass, should charge his troops during their flank march, he resolved to stop it by himself attacking our right wing with a superior force, while the rest of his army was executing the movement which was to reopen his communications with Sebesh. Next morning, as my regiment was going on duty at daybreak, a portion of the enemy's army, which we had beaten on the previous day, was seen to have turned our extreme right, in full retreat to Sebesh, while the remainder was coming to attack

us at Kliastitsi. In an instant all Marshal Oudinot's troops stood to their arms ; but while the generals were making their arrangements, a column of Russian grenadiers attacked and routed the Portuguese legion, and was marching on the large and solid post-house. It was on the point of capturing this important position, when the marshal, always foremost under fire, hurried up to my regiment, which by this time was at the outposts, and ordered me to try to stop the enemy, or at least delay him till our infantry could come up. I took my regiment along at a gallop and ordered them to charge, taking the enemy's line obliquely from its right, which always hampers infantry fire considerably. That of the grenadiers was, therefore, ineffective, and they would soon have felt our sabres. They were wavering already, when, whether instinctively or by order from their commander, they faced about and ran for a deep ditch which lay behind them, jumping into it, and, covered up to the chin, they opened a well-sustained file fire. In a moment I had six or seven men killed and a score wounded, and received myself a bullet in the left shoulder. My troopers were wild ; but our rage was powerless against men whom we were physically unable to reach. At this critical moment General Maison came up with his brigade of infantry, and ordered me to retire behind his battalions ; then he attacked the ditch from both flanks, killing or capturing all its defenders. As for me, I was taken severely wounded to the post-house and helped to dismount with difficulty. Dr. Parot, our regimental surgeon-major, came to dress me ; but the operation had hardly begun when it had to be interrupted. The Russian infantry was renewing its attack, and bullets were dropping like hail about us ; so that we had to move out of range. The doctor found my wound serious : it would have been mortal had not the thick twisted fringe of my epaulette turned the bullet and greatly deadened the force of the blow. This, however, was hard enough to throw me violently back till my body touched the croup of my horse ; the officers and men who were behind me thought I was killed, and I should have fallen if my orderlies had not held me up. The dressing was very painful, as the bullet had stuck in the bones just where the humerus is joined to the clavicle. To extract it the wound had to be enlarged, and the great scar is still to be seen. I confess that if I had been colonel I should have accompanied the troops of wounded who were being sent to Polotsk, crossed the Dwina, and gone to some town in Lithuania where I could get attended to. But I was only major ; the Emperor might



come posting in a day from Witebsk to review the regiments, and he never did anything except for soldiers present under arms. This rule, which at first sight seems cruel, was really in the interest of the service. It kept up the zeal of those who had been wounded and made them eager to rejoin their regiments as soon as they could, instead of dawdling in hospital, and the army gained much in efficient strength. Besides, I had every inducement to stay : success against the enemy, attachment to the regiment, the fact that I had been wounded when fighting with it. So I stayed, though suffering intolerable pain, and, putting my arm as well as I could into a sling, and getting hoisted on to my horse, went back to the regiment.

My regiment had not yet taken its place in the column when I rejoined it. On seeing me resume my place at their head in spite of my wound, officers and men received me with a general cheer, which, as showing the esteem and regard which the good fellows had conceived for me, touched me deeply. I felt especially grateful for the satisfaction which my colleague Major Fontaine expressed on seeing me again. This officer, though a brave and highly capable man, had so little ambition that he remained captain for eighteen years, thrice declined a majority and only accepted it at the Emperor's express order.

Oudinot's army was encamped in a forest of large fir-trees standing well apart. Beyond it was a large clearing. The edge of the wood formed an arc, of which the river was the chord. The Russian battalions were bivouacking very close to the river opposite to the ford, with fourteen guns in battery along its front. Wishing to surprise the enemy, General Legrand ordered General Albert to place a regiment of infantry in the wood at each extremity of the arc, and as soon as he heard the sound of cavalry in march, to advance upon both flanks of the enemy's camp, while the cavalry issuing from the wood at the middle of the arc was to charge at full speed upon the Russian battalions and drive them into the ravine. The duty assigned to the cavalry was clearly one of great peril ; for not only had it to deliver a front attack upon the enemy's line, but before reaching it to receive the fire of fourteen guns. It is true that by surprising the Russians we had a good hope of catching them asleep, and meeting with little resistance.

My regiment, having, as you have seen, been on duty the whole of July 31, was as usual to be relieved by the 24th at 1 a.m. on August 1. That regiment was therefore ordered to attack, and

mine to act in reserve, for the vacant space between the wood and the stream would only hold one regiment of cavalry. Colonel A—— went to Oudinot and remarked that there was reason to fear that while we were making ready to fight the troops in front of us, Wittgenstein would have sent a small column off to our right to cross the Drissa at a ford which probably existed three leagues higher than the point where we were, work round to our rear, and carry off our wounded and our baggage, and that it would therefore be as well to send a cavalry regiment to watch the ford in question. The marshal fell in with this idea, and Colonel A——, whose regiment had just gone on duty, ordered it to mount at once, and, taking it off on the proposed expedition, left the risk of the anticipated combat to the 23rd. My brave regiment, however, received the announcement of the dangerous task which it had to perform very calmly, and was delighted to see the marshal and General Legrand pass along the front of the line to superintend our preparations for the attack.

At that period all the French regiments except the cuirassiers had a picked or grenadier company or troop, which was always placed on the right of the line. That of the 23rd was in its place accordingly, when General Legrand remarked to the marshal that as the enemy's artillery was in front of his centre, and this would consequently be the point of greatest danger, it would be best, in order to avoid all possible hesitation, that the attack at that point should be made by the picked troop, consisting of the most seasoned men and the best horses. It was of no use to assure the marshal that the regiment, being almost entirely composed of veteran soldiers, was in all respects, moral and physical, just as strong in one part as another; he ordered me to place the picked troop in the centre. I obeyed, and, calling together my officers, I explained to them in a low voice what we had to do, and gave them notice that, in order to surprise the enemy better, I should confine myself to giving the word "Charge," without any preliminary command, as soon as our line was in short striking distance of the enemy's guns. Everything being settled, the regiment came out of its bivouac in dead silence with the first streak of dawn, and passed through the wood easily enough. Then we entered the level clearing, at the further end of which was the Russian encampment. Alone of the whole regiment, I had no sword in my hand, for my right, the only one which I could use, was occupied in holding the reins—a painful position, as you

can understand, for a cavalry officer who was just about to lead a charge. But I was determined to march with my regiment, and so took my place in front of the picked troop, having close to me its brave captain, M. Courteau, one of the best officers in the regiment, and the one to whom I was most attached.

All was perfectly quiet in the Russian camp as we advanced noiselessly at a walk, and my hope of surprising it rose when I saw that General Kulnieff had brought no cavalry across the ford, and we could distinguish by the faint light of the fires only a few infantry sentries, and those so near the camp that between the time they gave notice and our sudden appearance it was probable that the Russians would not be able to prepare for the defence. But suddenly, two ugly Cossacks, prowling and suspicious beings, appeared on horseback thirty paces from my line, looked at it for a moment, and sped away towards the camp, where, it was clear, they would announce our coming. This was a most disagreeable mishap, since but for it we should certainly have fallen upon the Russians without losing a single man. However, as we were discovered, and were, besides, approaching the point at which I had settled to quicken the pace, I put my horse into a gallop. The whole regiment did the same, and very soon I let them have the word to charge. Thereupon all my valiant troops dashed with me towards the camp, and we fell upon it like a thunderbolt. But the Cossacks had given the alarm; the gunners, who were lying close to their pieces snatched up their linstocks, and the guns at once belched grape at my regiment. Thirty-seven men, of whom nineteen belonged to the picked troop, fell dead on the spot, including Captain Courteau and Lieutenant Lallouette. Before the Russian gunners could reload they were cut down by our men. We had few wounded, nearly every hit having been mortal; some forty of our horses had been killed; mine was lamed by a grapeshot, but was able to carry me into the camp, where the Russian infantry suddenly aroused, were already hurrying to their arms. The chasseurs by my orders had placed themselves between them and the piled arms, so that very few were able to get at their muskets and open fire on us. At the sound of the cannon General Albert's two regiments of infantry had issued from the wood and hastened at the double to the two ends of the camp, where they were bayoneting all who tried to defend themselves. The Russians, in their confusion, could not resist this triple attack, and great part of them, who, having come across at night, had not been able to see the height of the banks, tried

to escape in that direction, and fell fifteen or twenty feet on to the rocks. In this way many perished.

Emboldened by this brilliant success, Marshal Oudinot resolved to pursue the Russians, and again passed the army to the right bank of the Drissa ; but in order to allow Albert's brigade and the 23rd time to recover from the fatigues of the action, he left them posted in observation on the field of battle. I took advantage of this rest to perform a ceremony seldom enough attended to in time of war, namely, to pay the last duties to those of our brave comrades who had fallen. A good-sized trench received them all, laid according to their ranks, with Captain Courteau and his lieutenant at the head of the line. Then the fourteen Russian guns, which the 23rd had so valiantly captured, were placed in front of the soldiers' grave.

This pious duty completed, I thought I would have my wound dressed, as it was causing me intense pain, and sat down for that purpose a little way off, under a huge pine. There I saw a young major, who, with his back against the trunk of the tree, and supported by two grenadiers, was painfully fastening a small packet the address of which was traced with blood ; the blood was his own. He belonged to Albert's brigade and had received in the attack on the Russian camp a fearful bayonet wound which had laid his body open. The wound had been dressed, but the blood continued to flow, and the stroke had been a deadly one. The poor man, who was aware of this, had wished before he succumbed to send his adieux to a lady to whom he was attached, but after he had written it he did not know to whom to entrust the precious missive. Just then chance brought me in his way. We knew each other only by sight ; still, feeling that death was close at hand, he begged me in a scarcely audible voice to do him two services, and after having sent the grenadiers a little way off, he gave me the packet, saying, with tears in his eyes, "There is a portrait in it." He made me promise to place it with secrecy in the proper hands if I was ever fortunate enough to return to Paris ; "besides," he added, "there is no hurry, for it will be better that it should not be received till long after I am no more." I promise to discharge this sad commission, but it was two years before I was able to do so. As for the second entreaty that the young major addressed to me, it was complied with two hours afterwards. It was painful to him to think of his body being torn to pieces by the wolves with which the country swarms, and he begged that I would place him beside the captain and

troopers of the 23rd, whose burial he had seen. I undertook to do so, and the poor officer having died soon after our interview, I carried out his last wishes.

Profoundly touched by this melancholy episode, I was plunged in sad reflections, when I was roused from my reverie by the distant sound of a lively cannonade. The two armies were again engaged. It turned out that Marshal Oudinot, having passed the station of Kliastitsi, had come up with the Russian rear-guard at the entry of the marsh, the issue from which had been so deadly to us twenty-four hours before, and had set himself to drive the enemy back into it. But the enemy, not being disposed to pass this dangerous strait, had made a counter-attack in force upon the French troops, who after considerable loss were retreating, pursued by the Russians. This new recoil on Oudinot's part was announced to us on the battlefield of Sivoshina by an aide-de-camp, who at the same time brought an order to General Albert to take his brigade and the 23rd Chasseurs two leagues to the rear in the direction of Polotsk. At the moment of starting, as I did not wish to abandon the fourteen guns which my regiment had captured in the morning, the horses which had drawn them from the enemy having also fallen into our hands, we harnessed them and drove them to our next bivouac, whence this glorious trophy of the courage of the 23rd was forwarded the next night to Polotsk, and our fourteen guns very shortly rendered efficacious help in the defence of that town. Oudinot's army retreated that day as far as the ford of Sivoshina, while Wittgenstein, rendered more cautious by the disaster which his advance-guard had incurred at the same spot that morning, did not dare to venture any detached corps on the bank occupied by our troops, and, with the Drissa between them, both armies took up their positions for the night. But on August 2, Oudinot having brought his troops near Polotsk, both sides were in such need of rest that hostilities ceased for some days. The good General Castex rejoined us, and also the 24th, who were by no means grateful to their colonel for having carried them off just when it was their turn to attack the Russian camp, while on their way up the Drissa they had neither seen a single enemy nor found the supposed ford.

After a few days' rest Wittgenstein took part of his troops lower down the Dwina, where Macdonald was threatening his right. Marshal Oudinot having followed the Russian army in that direction, they faced round towards us, and for eight or ten days there were continual marches and counter-marches, and many

small engagements, of which it would be too long and too troublesome to give particulars, seeing that all this led to no other result than a useless slaughter of men, and a proof that the commanders of the two armies were lacking in decision. The most serious of the combats which were fought during this short period took place on August 13, near the splendid convent of Valensoui, on the banks of the Svolna. This little stream, the banks of which are very muddy, lay between the French and the Russians, and it was evident that whichever of the two generals tried to force a passage over such unfavourable ground would incur a sanguinary repulse. Accordingly, neither Wittgenstein nor Oudinot had any plan of crossing the Svolna at this point ; but, instead of going elsewhere to look for a battlefield on which they might try conclusions, both took up their position on the stream, as though in mutual defiance. Very soon a brisk cannonade was set up between the two banks ; utterly useless, because on neither side could the troops reach their adversary ; so that this deplorable fighting could not be of the least advantage to anybody. Wittgenstein, however, to spare his soldiers, had merely posted a few battalions of infantry among the willows and reeds on the river's edge, keeping his other troops out of range of the French guns, whose well-sustained fire only reached a few of his skirmishers. Oudinot, however, insisted, in spite of the prudent remarks of several generals, on bringing his first line near the river, and thus incurred losses which he could and should have avoided. The Russian artillery is far from being as good as ours, but on campaign it employs pieces called *unicorns*, the range of which was longer than that of any French guns of that period, and it was these that did the greatest execution among our troops.

Marshal Oudinot, persuaded that the enemy was going to cross the stream, not only kept a division of infantry near enough to repulse them, but also made General Castex's cavalry support it ; a superfluous precaution, since the crossing of even a small river requires more time than the defenders need to come up to meet the attack. In spite of this, my regiment and the 24th were exposed for twenty-four hours to the Russian cannon-balls, which killed and maimed a good many of our men.

While this action was going on, the aide-de-camp whom Oudinot had sent to the Emperor at Witebsk with the report of the fighting at Kliastitsi and Sivoshina returned. Napoleon lavishly rewarded the 2nd corps, both with promotions and with decorations, to show that he did not hold the troops responsible

for the ill-success of our operations. Four Crosses of the Legion of Honour were awarded to each cavalry regiment; but with regard to the 23rd Chasseurs Berthier added that, in order to express his satisfaction at the admirable conduct of the regiment in the various engagements, the Emperor sent it, over and above the four rewards given to the other regiments, fourteen decorations, one for each gun captured by it from Kulnieff's advanced guard. I had therefore eighteen crosses to distribute to my brave regiment. The aide-de-camp had not brought the patents, but the chief of the staff supplemented his message by asking the commanders of regiments to indicate the soldiers who should receive them, and send him the list. I assembled all the captains, and, guiding myself by their advice, I drew up my list and went to present it to Marshal Oudinot, begging him to let me announce it on the spot to the regiment. "What? here among the cannon-balls?" "Yes, Marshal, among the cannon-balls; it would be more chivalrous."

General Laurencez, who, as senior staff officer, had drawn up the report of the various actions, and warmly eulogized the 23rd Chasseurs, being of my opinion, the marshal acceded to my request. The decorations would not come till later, but I sent for a piece of ribbon which I happened to have in my baggage, and, cutting it into eighteen pieces, I made known to the regiment the rewards which had been granted them by the Emperor. Then, calling the recipients out of the ranks in their turn, I gave each a bit of the red ribbon, which then was so coveted, and so honourably borne, and of which the distinction has been since so sadly lowered by the way in which it has been lavished—I may say prostituted. This distribution in presence of the enemy, under fire, produced an immense effect on the regiment, and their enthusiasm rose to the highest point when I called old Sergeant Prud'homme, justly reputed the bravest and the most modest soldier in the whole regiment. Calm as ever, this hero, famous in many brilliant actions, came up with a shy demeanour and received the ribbon amid the hearty cheers of all the squadrons. It was a real triumph for him. I shall never forget this touching scene, which, as I have said, took place under the guns of the enemy. But no happiness is complete. Two men whom I had got on my list as most nearly rivalling Prud'homme in desert had just been cruelly wounded: Sergeant Legendre, the slayer of General Kulnieff, had had an arm carried away, and Corporal Griffon a leg smashed. They were undergoing amputation when I proceeded to the

ambulance to give them their decorations. At the sight of the ribbon of the Legion of Honour they seemed to forget their pain, and broke forth into the liveliest joy. Legendre, however, did not survive his wound long, but Griffon got well and was sent back to France ; some years afterwards I came across him again at the Invalides.

You are doubtless asking what I got for myself in this distribution of rewards. Nothing whatever ; because the Emperor, before deciding to withdraw the command of the regiment from Colonel de la Nougarède by promoting him, wished to be sure that his health would allow him to serve as general, or head of a legion of gendarmerie. Marshal Oudinot was therefore directed to have him examined by a medical board. Their opinion was that he would never be able to ride again, and the marshal accordingly gave him leave to return to France, where he was put in command of a second-class fortress. Before leaving Polotsk, whither he had been compelled by infirmity to retire, the poor colonel wrote me a very touching letter in which he took leave of the 23rd ; and although he had never led the regiment into action, which attaches troops more than anything to their commander, he was nevertheless regretted, as he well deserved. The regiment being thus left without a colonel, the marshal expected to receive notice of my promotion to that rank, and I frankly admit that I also quite hoped for it ; but the Emperor having left Witebsk to march on Smolensk, departmental business slackened under the stress of business caused by military operations. It was still three months before I got my step.

On August 16, the day on which my eldest son Alfred\* was born, the Russian army, more than 60,000 strong, attacked Oudinot, who, with Saint-Cyr's Bavarians, had 52,000 men at his disposal. In an ordinary war, an engagement in which 112,000 men took part would have been called a battle, and its decision would have had important results ; but in 1812, amid belligerent forces amounting to 600,000 or 700,000 men, the meeting of 100,000 only reckoned as a combat. At any rate this is the name given to the affair between Oudinot and the Russians under the walls of Polotsk. This town, which stands on the left bank of the Dwina, is surrounded with ancient earthworks. Before the principal front of the place, the fields, in which vegetables are grown, are cut up by an infinite number of little water-courses, obstacles

\*[Baron Alfred de Marbot was *Maître des Requêtes* to the Council of State. He died in 1865.]



which, though not exactly impassable for guns and cavalry, hamper their march a good deal. These market-gardens extended to some half a league before the town ; but to their left, along the bank of the Dwina, is a vast stretch of meadow, level as a carpet. That was the side by which the Russian general should have attacked Polotsk. He would thus have become master of the single weak bridge of boats affording us our only communication with the left bank, whence we drew our supplies of ammunition and provisions. But Wittgenstein preferred to take the bull by the horns, and directed his main body towards the gardens, hoping to be able from thence to carry the place by escalade ; the ramparts being, in fact, nothing but slopes easy to ascend, though commanding a distant view. The attack was smartly delivered ; but our infantry defended the gardens bravely, while from the top of the ramparts our artillery, including the fourteen guns captured at Sivoshina, did terrible execution in the enemy's ranks. The Russians retired in disorder to re-form in the plain ; and Oudinot, instead of maintaining his good position, pursued them, and was in his turn repulsed. Thus a great part of the day passed ; the Russians returning incessantly to the attack and the French always driving them back beyond the gardens. While the slaughter thus swayed to and fro, Saint-Cyr followed Oudinot in silence ; and whenever his opinion was asked he merely bowed and said : " My lord marshal ! " as though he would say : " As they have made you a marshal, you must know more about the matter than a mere general like me ; get out of it as best you can."

The enemy renewed the combat, and when we had crossed the bridge and turned our heads to see what was taking place on the bank we had left we witnessed a most affecting sight. The French infantry, with the Bavarians and the Croats, were fighting bravely, and having the best of it ; but the Portuguese legion and the Swiss were flying before the Russians, and did not halt till they were knee-deep in the river. There, compelled to face the enemy or be drowned, they fought at last, and by a well-sustained file fire forced the Russians to give ground somewhat. The French artillery commander, who had just crossed the Dwina, cleverly seized the moment to be of service. Bringing his guns to the bank, and firing over the river, he smote the enemy's battalions on the other side. This powerful diversion stopped Wittgenstein in this quarter, and as the French, Bavarians, and Croats were elsewhere repulsing him, the fighting slackened, and for the last hour of the day degenerated into sharpshooting. But Marshal

Oudinot could not hide from himself that he would have to begin again next day. Full of thought over a state of things of which he could not see the issue, and brought up at every turn by Saint-Cyr's obstinate refusal to speak, he was riding along at a walk, followed by a single aide-de-camp, among his infantry skirmishers, when the enemy's marksmen, noticing the horseman with white plumes, made him their target, and sent a bullet into his arm.

The marshal at once sent word to Saint-Cyr that he was wounded, and handed the command over to him. Leaving to him the task of getting things straight, he left the field, crossed the bridge, and, leaving the army, retired to Lithuania to get his hurt tended. It was two months before we saw him again.

## CHAPTER XXX

*GENERAL SAINT-CYR'S* first act was to call in the skirmishers. He was certain that the tired enemy would follow his example as soon as they were no longer attacked ; and in fact the fire soon ceased on both sides. The troops could concentrate and take some rest, and business seemed to be put off until the next day. So that he might be in a position to engage with better chances of success, Saint-Cyr took advantage of the night to make his arrangements for repulsing the enemy, or securing his retreat in the event of a reverse. To this end he assembled the regimental commanders, and after having explained the dangers of the situation, the most serious of which was the crowded state of the town and of the approaches to the bridge, he gave orders that the colonels, with other officers and patrols, should go through the streets directing all the uninjured soldiers of their regiments to the bivouacs, and sending the sick and wounded and all led horses and wagons across the bridge. He added that at break of day he would go round the town and suspend any colonel who had not carried out his orders. No excuse would be accepted. The orders were quickly carried out, and all that was not required for the fight—all the impedimenta of the army, in short—was collected on the left bank. Soon the ramparts and streets, as well as the bridge, were completely clear. The bridge was strengthened, the cavalry and artillery brought back to the right bank and established in the suburb furthest from the enemy. Finally, to facilitate his means of retreat, the prudent commander-in-chief

had a second bridge, to be used only by infantry, constructed out of empty barrels and planks.

Although the great Polish landowners in the neighbourhood of Polotsk did not venture, for fear of compromising themselves with the Russians, to take sides openly with the French, they helped us in secret, and made no difficulty about finding us spies. General Saint-Cyr, in his anxiety as to the enemy's preparations, had asked one of these nobles to send him one of his most intelligent serfs. He sent several wagons of forage to the Russian bivouac, and among the wagoners placed his bailiff, dressed as a peasant. This person, a man of intelligence, chatted with Wittgenstein's soldiers, and learnt that a large body of troops was expected. He even witnessed the arrival of the Cossacks of the Guard, and of a squadron of "gentlemen-guards," and was told that several battalions would reach the camp towards midnight. Having got this information, the bailiff reported it to his master, who lost no time in imparting it to the French commander-in-chief. On receiving this news, Saint-Cyr resolved to beat Wittgenstein before the reinforcements came up; but, as he did not wish to enter upon too long an engagement, he warned the generals and colonels that he should not attack till six in the evening, so that night should set a term to the fighting, and that in case the Russians were successful they should not have time to follow it up. Wishing to act by way of surprise, he gave orders that the most perfect quiet should be maintained in the town, and along the whole line of outposts.

We found the day very long: everyone, even the commander-in-chief, for all his coolness, had his watch constantly in his hand. Having noticed the day before that the retirement of the French cavalry had allowed the Russians to push our left wing back into the Dwina, General Saint-Cyr brought all his squadrons quietly, a moment before the attack, behind some large stone houses, beyond which the meadows began. On this level ground the cavalry were to act, charging the enemy's right and covering the left of our infantry, the two first divisions of which were to attack the Russian camp, while the third supported the cavalry, and the two last formed the reserve and guarded the town. All was ready when, at six in the evening, the general signal for the attack was given by cannon-shot. This was followed by the thunder of all the French artillery, the projectiles of which fell upon the outposts, even upon the camp of the enemy. Instantly our two leading divisions, the 26th Light Infantry in front, dashed upon

the Russian regiments posted in the gardens, killed and captured all whom they could reach, and, putting the others to flight, pursued them to the camp, where they made many prisoners and captured several guns. The surprise, although in broad daylight, was so complete that General Wittgenstein was quietly dining in a small country house contiguous to his camp when he was warned that the French voltigeurs were in the courtyard. Jumping out of window, he found a Cossack pony at hand, got on its back, and fled with all speed to his main body. Our men took possession of the Russian general's horses, his papers, his wagons, and his wine, as well as his plate and the dinner on the table. Immense booty was also taken in the camp by other companies.

While this infantry action was taking place before Polotsk, the fortunes of the left wing of our army in the meadows along the Dwina were as follows. As soon as the first cannon-shot gave the signal for action, our cavalry regiments, headed by Castex's brigade, moved rapidly to meet the enemy's squadrons which were advancing on us. A serious engagement appeared imminent, and General Castex kindly remarked to me that though I had been able, in spite of my wound, to command my regiment at Sivosluna and the Svolna, when I had only to face infantry and artillery fire, it did not follow that I could do so now, when we should be engaged with cavalry. I might find myself involved in a charge without the means of defending myself, since, as I could only use one arm, I could not hold both sabre and bridle; and he advised me, therefore, to stay for the moment with the infantry division posted in reserve. I felt that I could not accept this good-natured offer, and expressed so strongly my objection at being away from the regiment that the general yielded; but he had six of the bravest troopers placed close in rear of me, commanded by the intrepid Sergeant Piud'homme. Further, I had beside me the two adjutants, the regimental staff-sergeants, a trumpeter, and Fousse, my orderly, one of the best men in the regiment. Thus surrounded, and riding in front of the centre of a squadron, I was pretty well protected, and in the case of urgent necessity I could drop my reins and take up my sword, which hung to my wrist by its knot.

The meadow being large enough to hold two regiments in line, the 23rd and 24th formed the first line, General Corbineau's brigade, consisting of three regiments, forming the second, and the cuirassiers following as reserve. The 24th, which was on the left, had in front of it a regiment of Russian dragoons; my

regiment was facing Cossacks of the guard, known by their red coats and the beauty of their horses. These, though they had arrived only a few hours before, seemed in no way fatigued. We advanced at a gallop, and as soon as we were within striking distance General Castex gave the word to charge. His brigade fell upon the Russians, and at the first stroke the 24th broke the dragoons opposed to them. My regiment met with more resistance from the Cossacks, picked men of large stature and armed with lances fourteen feet long, which they held very straight. I had some men killed, and a good many wounded; but when, at length, my troopers had pierced the blustering line of steel, all the advantage was on our side. In a cavalry fight the length of lances is a drawback when their bearers have lost their order and are pressed closely by adversaries armed with swords which they can handle easily, while the lancers find it difficult to present the point of their poles. So the Cossacks were constrained to show their backs, and then my troopers did great execution and took many excellent horses.

During this bustling cavalry action, my wound had caused me severe pain, especially when I had to put my horse into a gallop. My inability to defend myself often put me into a very awkward position, from which I should not have escaped had I not been surrounded by a group of brave men who never let me out of their sight. One time, when I was pushed by the combatants on to a section of Cossacks, I was obliged, in self-defence to let go my reins and take my sword. However, I had no need to use it, for the men of every rank who escorted me, seeing their commander in danger, furiously attacked the Cossacks, by whom I was surrounded, made many of them bite the dust, and put the rest to flight. My orderly, Fousse, killed three; Adjutant Joly, two. I returned, therefore, from this great fight safe and sound. I had wished to be present at it in person in order to put still more dash into my regiment, and to show that, so long as I could sit on my horse, I felt bound in honour to command it in the hour of danger. Officers and men were much pleased with my devotion, and, as you will see later when I come to speak of the disasters of the great retreat, the liking they had for me increased.

You will think that I have described too much in detail the various actions in which the 2nd corps was concerned; but I repeat what I have said before, that I enjoy the reminiscences of the great wars in which I took part, and I speak of them with

pleasure. I seem to be in the field, in the midst of my gallant companions, most of whom, alas ! have now left this world.

On hearing of Saint-Cyr's victory the Emperor sent him his marshal's baton. But instead of visiting his troops, the new marshal lived, if possible, more apart than ever. No one could approach the commander-in-chief, whence the soldiers nicknamed him "the owl." The numerous rooms of the convent would have been of great service for the wounded, but he would live there alone, and thought he had conceded a great deal when he allowed wounded field-officers to be put in the out-buildings. Even they were only allowed to remain forty-eight hours, after which they had to be moved into the town. The cellars were overflowing with provisions, but the marshal kept the keys, and not even the hospitals could get anything. I had much trouble in getting two bottles of wine for Major Fontaine. Strange to say, Saint-Cyr was most abstemious, and used scarcely any of the stores for himself. Two months later, when the French had to leave the place, after setting town and convent on fire, all these provisions, which the marshal would not distribute, became the prey of the Russians or of the flames.

While the events which I have just been recording had been taking place before Polotsk, the Emperor had stayed at Witebsk, and thence was directing the operations of his numerous army corps. He left Witebsk on August 13, and, placing the 2nd and 6th corps under the command of Saint-Cyr at Polotsk, moved to Krasnoe, where part of the Grand Army was assembled in presence of the enemy. A battle was expected, but only a slight engagement took place with the Russian rear-guard, who were beaten and retreated nimbly. On the 15th, his *fête* day, the Emperor held a march past of the troops, who greeted him with enthusiasm. Next day the army came in sight of Smolensk, called by the Russians "the holy," since they regard it as the key of Moscow and the palladium of their Empire.

Seeing that the ramparts were armed with a great number of guns, General Eblé of the artillery, a most able man, advised the Emperor to turn the place, by sending Prince Poniatowski's Polish corps to cross the Dnieper two leagues further up. But Napoleon, following the opinion of Ney, who assured him that Smolensk would be easily carried, gave the order to attack. Thereupon the corps of Davout, Ney, and Poniatowski made for the place from different sides. A sanguinary combat took place. Our troops were decimated by round-shot, grape, and shells, while our

artillery could make no impression on the walls. At length, as night came on, the enemy, after disputing the ground valiantly foot by foot, was pushed back into Smolensk, and made ready to abandon it. But as they withdrew they set it on fire in various quarters, and thus the Emperor saw his hopes vanish of taking a town which he had every reason to suppose was full of provisions. Not till daybreak on the next morning did the French enter the place, the streets of which were heaped with corpses and smoking ruins. The capture of Smolensk had cost us 12,000 men, killed and wounded; and this huge loss we might have avoided by crossing the Dnieper, as General Eblé proposed, further up. After burning the bridge, the Russians took up their position for the moment upon the high ground of the right bank, but soon retreated along the road to Moscow. Marshal Ney pursued them with his own corps, strengthened by Gudin's division and Davout's. A short distance from Smolensk he came up with the Russian army at Valutina, engaged in a defile, with all its baggage. The action developed into a real battle, which would have been fatal to the enemy if General Junot, who had accomplished the passage of the Dnieper too slowly at Prondichewo, two leagues above Smolensk, and halted there for forty-eight hours, had marched upon the sound of Ney's guns, only a league away from him. But, though warned by Ney, Junot did not stir. In vain did the Emperor's aide-de-camp, Chabot, bring him an order to join Ney; in vain did Gourgaud repeat the order. Junot remained immovable.

If Junot had chosen to take part in the fight, he could have shut the Russian army into a narrow defile, where it would have been caught between two fires and compelled to lay down its arms, and this would have put an end to the war. Then people regretted King Jerome, who, though a poor general, would probably have come to the assistance of Ney, and everyone expected to see Junot severely punished. But he was the first officer in whom Napoleon had inspired a personal attachment, and he had followed him in every campaign from Toulon to Russia; the Emperor liked him and forgave him—a misfortune, for it was becoming necessary to make an example.

The French advance-guard, always pushing the enemy before it, had passed Dorogobush before the Emperor made up his mind to leave Smolensk. It was oppressively hot; they had to march on shifting sands; and the supply of food was insufficient for such a mighty assemblage of men and horses, for the Russians had left nothing behind them but burnt villages and farms. The

nearer they drew to Moscow the scantier grew the resources of the country. Men, and especially horses, began to die. In a few days cold rain succeeded the intolerable heat, and continued till September 4; autumn was coming on. The army was not more than six leagues from Mojaïsk, the last town left to take before reaching Moscow, when a considerable increase was perceived in the strength of the enemy's rear-guard, and there was every sign that a great battle was at last going to be fought. On the 5th our advance was checked for a moment by a powerful Russian column strongly entrenched on a rising ground garnished with twelve guns. The 57th of the line, which in the Italian days the Emperor had surnamed "The Terrible," bravely maintained its reputation by capturing the enemy's redoubt and artillery. They were now on the ground where forty-eight hours later took place the battle which the Russians called *Borodino*, the French *la Moskova*.

On September 6 the Emperor issued a general order announcing a battle for the morrow. The army joyfully awaited the great day which was to end its misery, for the troops had received no rations for a month, each man living how he could. For the Russians, Bagration commanded the left wing, 62,000 men; in the centre was Platoff, with his Cossacks, and 30,000 infantry in reserve; the right wing, consisting of 70,000 men, was under Barclay de Tolly, who, having been deposed from the chief command, had taken a secondary place. Kutusoff was commander-in-chief. To oppose 162,000 men the Emperor Napoleon had barely 140,000 at his disposal. They were thus distributed: Eugène commanded the left, Davout the right, Ney the centre, Murat the cavalry; the guard was in reserve.

The battle was fought on September 7. The weather was overcast, and a cold wind raised clouds of dust. The Emperor, suffering terribly from headache, descended towards a kind of ravine, where he passed the greater part of the day in pacing about. From this spot he could see only a portion of the field, and to command the whole of it he had to ascend a neighbouring hillock. This he did only twice during the battle, and he has been reproached with inaction; but it must be remarked that at the point where he was, with the reserve, he was in a position to receive frequent reports as to what was taking place all along the line; while, if he had been always going from one wing to another over ground so broken, the aides-de-camp bringing important intelligence would not have known where to find him. It must



be remembered, too, that he was unwell, and the icy wind, blowing with great force, prevented him from staying on horseback.

Although the Russians had been beaten and forced to evacuate the field of battle, their commander-in-chief, Kutusoff, had the audacity to write to the Emperor Alexander that he had just won a great victory over the French. This misleading news reached St. Petersburg on the day of Alexander's fête, and caused the liveliest joy. *Te Deum* was sung, while Kutusoff was proclaimed the saviour of his country, and created field-marshal. But the truth was soon known, and joy turned to mourning. Still, Kutusoff was a field-marshal, and he desired no more. Any other than the timid Alexander would have severely punished the falsehood; but he could not do without Kutusoff, who therefore remained in command of the army.

The Russians, in their retreat towards Moscow, were overtaken on the morning of the 8th at Mojaïsk, and in the cavalry action which ensued General Belliard was wounded.

Napoleon left Mojaïsk on September 12 and entered Moscow on the 15th. The great town was deserted, the governor, General Rostopchin, having made all the inhabitants go out. The beaten Russian troops only passed through Moscow, and went on to re-form thirty leagues further, towards Kalouga. King Murat followed them with infantry and cavalry, while the guard remained in the city, and Napoleon established himself in the Kremlin, the ancient palace of the Czars. All was apparently quiet, when, on the night of September 15, some French and German traders who had escaped the governor's search came and warned Napoleon's staff that the town was about to be set on fire. This was soon confirmed by a Russian police-agent, who could not make up his mind to execute the orders of his chief. He said that before leaving Moscow, Rostopchin had set free the prisoners, and distributed to them torches made by English workmen. The incendiaries were in the palace awaiting the signal. The Emperor at once prescribed the most severe measures. The streets were patrolled, and many brigands caught in the act of arson were killed. But it was too late; the fire burst out at different points, and spread all the more rapidly that Rostopchin had had all the pumps removed; so that in a short time Moscow was one fiery furnace. The Emperor left the Kremlin, and took refuge in the château of Peterskoe; he only returned three days later, when the fire was beginning to burn itself out. I shall not enter into any details of the burning of Moscow, as the story has

been told by several eye-witnesses, but will discuss later on the effects of this enormous catastrophe.

Napoleon did not lose all hope of peace. On October 4 he sent General Lauriston to Kutusoff's head-quarters. The cunning Russian showed Lauriston a letter from himself to the Emperor Alexander urging him to accept the French proposals, seeing, as he said, that the Russian army was in no state to continue the war. But hardly had the officer bearing this dispatch started for St. Petersburg, furnished by Lauriston with a passport to guard him against attack from any of our people who were prowling between the two armies, when Kutusoff sent a second aide-de-camp to his Emperor. Having no French passport he was caught by our patrols, arrested as lawful prize, and his dispatches sent to Napoleon. They contained the very opposite of what Kutusoff had shown to Lauriston. In fact, the Russian marshal, after begging his sovereign not to treat with the French, announced that Admiral Tchichagoff's army, having left Wallachia after peace made with the Turks, was advancing on Minsk to cut off Napoleon's retreat. At sight of this letter Napoleon, perceiving that he had been tricked, burst into a violent rage, and, it is said, formed a plan of marching on St. Petersburg. But the weakness of his army and the rigours of winter were in the way of that expedition; and, moreover, he had important reasons for wishing to be near Germany, and in a better position for keeping an eye on it and on affairs in France. A conspiracy had broken out in Paris, and for one day its leaders had been in possession of the capital. General Malet, an excitable person, had thrown the spark which might have kindled a blaze; and if he had not been met by a man no less clear-headed than energetic, in the person of Laborde, it might have been all up with the Imperial Government. Even so, the incident made a great impression, and Napoleon's grief at learning the danger in which his family and his ministers had been may be imagined.

Meanwhile his position at Moscow was growing daily more serious. The cold was already intense, and only those soldiers who were French by birth retained their spirit. But they were not the half of those whom Napoleon had led into Russia. The rest were Germans, Swiss, Croats, Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese. All these foreigners, who remained loyal so long as the army prospered, were beginning to grumble; Russian agents inundated our camps with proclamations in divers languages; and the men began to desert in great numbers under promise that they should

be sent home. Besides this, the two wings of the Grand Army, composed solely of Austrians and Prussians, were no longer in line with the centre as when the campaign began, but were in our rear, ready to bar our road at a word from their sovereigns, the ancient and irreconcilable enemies of France. The position was most critical ; and, bitter as it was to Napoleon's pride, by withdrawing before he had imposed peace on Alexander, to admit to the whole world that he had missed the aim of his expedition, the word "retreat" was at last spoken. Not yet, however, had the Emperor or the marshals or anyone any idea of leaving Russia and recrossing the Niemen ; it was only a question of taking up winter quarters in some of the least uncomfortable provinces of Poland.

The evacuation of Moscow was thus practically settled ; but, before making up his mind to carry it out, Napoleon, with some last hope of an understanding, sent Caulaincourt, the Duke of Vicenza, to Marshal Kutusoff, but got no reply. During this delay our army was melting away daily, while in blind confidence our outposts were left exposed in the province of Kalouga. Suddenly an unexpected event occurred, to open the eyes of the most incredulous, and destroy any hopes which the Emperor might retain on the subject of peace.

General Sébastiani, who had already allowed himself to be surprised at Druia, had replaced Montbrun in command of the 2nd cavalry corps. Close to the enemy as he was, he passed his days in slippers reading Italian poetry and never reconnoitring. Kutusoff took advantage of this, and on October 18 marched on Sébastiani's corps, surrounded it, overwhelmed it by superior numbers, and compelled it to abandon part of its artillery. The three cavalry divisions only succeeded in rejoining Murat's troops by cutting down several battalions of the enemy who tried in vain to oppose their passage. Sébastiani, who was brave enough, displayed much courage in the fight ; but as a general he may be noted for mediocrity.

Simultaneously with this surprise of Sébastiani, Kutusoff attacked Murat all along his line ; and the prince himself was slightly wounded. The Emperor heard of the affair the same day ; also that 10,000 cavalry from the army of Wallachia had been permitted by our allies the Austrians to reach the enemy's camp. Thereupon he ordered that the retreat should begin next day.

On the morning of October 19 the Emperor left Moscow. He

had entered it on September 15. He himself, with the Old Guard and the main body of the army, took the road to Kalouga. From this he hoped to reach Smolensk through a fertile and unexhausted district. But, after several days' march, our troops, which, since Murat had rejoined them, amounted still to over 100,000 men, found themselves in presence of the Russian army, occupying the little town of Malo-Jaroslavitz. The enemy's position was exceedingly strong, but the Emperor none the less ordered Eugène to attack it with the Italian corps and the divisions of Morand and Gérard. Nothing could stay the dash of our troops, and they took the town after a long and murderous engagement, which cost us 4,000 men killed and wounded. Next day, October 24, the Emperor, astounded by the brisk resistance by which he had been met, and knowing that the whole Russian army blocked his road, halted his troops, and spent three days in considering what steps he should take.

During a reconnaissance Napoleon was on the verge of being captured by the enemy. It was a thick fog. Suddenly the shouts of "Hourra! hourra!" were heard, and a number of Cossacks issued from a wood near the road. They crossed the road twenty paces from the Emperor, overturning and spearing all whom they met as they passed. But General Rapp, dashing forward at the head of two squadrons of chasseurs and mounted grenadiers of the guard, put the enemy to flight.

Napoleon, having assured himself by reconnaissances that it was impossible to continue his march towards Kalouga, except by fighting a sanguinary battle against Kutusoff's numbers, decided to regain Smolensk by way of Mojaïsk. So the army left a fertile region to follow a route which they had devastated and had traversed in September amid blazing villages and heaps of corpses. The nature of the Emperor's movement, which resulted in bringing him, after ten days' hard work, to a point only twelve leagues from Moscow, made the troops very anxious as to the future. The weather became fearful. After blowing up the Kremlin, Marshal Mortier rejoined the Emperor. Again the army beheld Mojaïsk and the battlefield of the Moskwa. The ground was furrowed by cannon-balls and covered with débris of every kind, and 30,000 corpses half-devoured by wolves. The soldiers and the Emperor passed quickly, casting a sad look on this vast charnel-house.

After several days' halt at Smolensk to allow the stragglers to come up, the Emperor went on the 15th to Krasnoe, and thence

sent an officer to the 2nd army corps on the Dwina, in which now his only hope of safety resided. The regiments composing this corps had undergone less fatigue and privation than those which had taken part in the march to Moscow ; but, on the other hand, they had encountered the enemy much more frequently. Napoleon wished to reward them by appointing them to all the vacant posts, and had all the recommendations for promotion brought to him. There were several in my favour, one of which asked only for the rank of lieutenant-colonel for me. The secretary happened to present this one, and I have it from General Grundier, who, having been ordered to bring these dispatches, was at the moment in the Emperor's room, that Napoleon when signing substituted the word colonel, remarking, " I am discharging an old debt." So at last I became colonel of the 23rd Chasseurs. It was November 15, but I did not hear of it till some time afterwards.

The retreat continued painfully, and the enemy, with ever-increasing numbers, separated Prince Eugène's corps from the army, and also those of Davout and Ney. The first two succeeded with much difficulty in cutting their way through and getting back to the Emperor, who was in a state of painful anxiety about Ney's corps, several days having passed without any news of it. On November 19 Napoleon reached Orcha. A month had passed since he had left Moscow, and he was still 120 leagues from the Niemen ; the cold was intense.

While the Emperor was agitated by gloomy uncertainty as to the fate of the rear-guard and its intrepid leader, Ney was performing one of the most brilliant feats of arms recorded in military annals. Leaving Smolensk on the 17th after blowing up the ramparts, the marshal had hardly started when he was assailed by myriads of the enemy, who attacked him on both flanks, in front, and in rear. Continually beating them off, Ney marched through their midst for three days ; but he found himself checked at length by the dangerous passage of the Krasnoe ravine, beyond which could be seen a strong body of Russian troops, with a formidable artillery, which opened a brisk and well-maintained fire. Undismayed by this unforeseen obstacle, the marshal took the bold resolve of forcing the passage, and ordered the 48th of the line, commanded by Masséna's old aide-de-camp, Colonel Pelet, to charge with the bayonet. At the sound of Ney's voice the French soldiers, worn out as they were with fatigue and want, and numbed with the cold, dashed forward and carried the Russian batteries. The

enemy recovered them, and our troops drove them out again, but they had at last to yield to numbers. The 48th was cut to pieces by grapeshot, and in great part destroyed. Out of 650 men who entered the ravine, 100 only came back, Colonel Pelet, severely wounded, being of the number. Night came on, and all hope of the rear-guard rejoining the army appeared to be lost. But Ney had confidence in his troops, and above all in himself. By his orders numerous lines of fires were kindled so as to hold the enemy in their camp, in fear of a fresh attack on the morrow. The marshal had resolved to place the Dnieper between him and the Russians, and to entrust his destiny and that of his troops to the frail ice of the river. His only doubt was as to the road which he ought to take in order to reach the Dnieper as soon as possible. Just then a Russian colonel, coming from Krasnoe, presented himself as a flag of truce, and summoned Ney to lay down his arms. At the thought of such humiliation the marshal's anger burst forth, and, as the officer bore no written orders, Ney declared that he did not consider him as a flag of truce, but as a spy, and that he would have him bayoneted if he did not guide them to the nearest point of the Dnieper. The Russian colonel was compelled to obey, and Ney instantly gave orders to leave the camp in silence. Artillery, caissons, baggage, and wounded were abandoned, and, favoured by the darkness, he reached the banks of the Dnieper after four hours' march.

The river was frozen, but not hard enough to be practicable at all points, for there were many cracks and places where the ice was so thin that it gave way when several crossed at once. The marshal therefore made the soldiers cross in single file, and the passage of the river thus accomplished, Marshal Ney's troops deemed themselves in safety. But by the dawning light they perceived a large bivouac of Cossacks. Platoff was in command then, and as, according to his habit he had been drinking all night, he was at that moment asleep. Now discipline is so strict in the Russian army that no one dared to awake the chief, nor stand to arms without his order. The fragments of Ney's corps therefore edged along a league from the hetman's camp without being attacked; nor did they see any more of Platoff's Cossacks till the next day. For three days Marshal Ney marched, fighting incessantly, along the winding banks of the Dnieper, to Orcha, and on the 20th came in sight of the town. He hoped to find the Emperor and the army there; but between him and it there still lay a wide plain, occupied by a strong body of the enemy's

infantry, which was advancing on him, the Cossacks, meanwhile, preparing to attack his rear. Taking up a defensible position, he sent several officers, one after another, to make sure that the French were still in Orcha ; since otherwise further resistance would be of no avail. One of them reached the place, and found the headquarters still there. On learning that Ney had returned the Emperor evinced the greatest joy, and in order to deliver him from his dangerous situation he sent Eugène and Mortier to meet him. They repulsed the enemy, and brought Marshal Ney, with what remained of the brave men under his command, back to Orcha. This retreat did Ney the greatest credit.

That day the Emperor continued his retreat by Kokanoff and Toloczin, to Bobia, where he found Marshal Victor's troops lately arrived from Germany, and came into touch with the 2nd corps, the command of which Saint-Cyr had just handed back to Oudinot.

## CHAPTER XXXI

*AS IT* is important to explain the reasons which had brought the 2nd corps back to the main body of the army, from which it had been separated since the beginning of the campaign, I must resume the summary of its history from the month of August. At that time, after having beaten the Russians before Polotsk, Marshal Saint-Cyr had formed a vast entrenched camp near that place, garrisoning it with some of his troops, and distributing the rest about both banks of the Dwina. The light cavalry covered the cantonments, and, as I have said, Castex's brigade, including my regiment, was placed at Luchonski on the Polota, whence we were able to watch the main roads coming from Sebesch and Nevel. Wittgenstein's army after its defeat had retired behind those towns, so that between the Russians and the French there was a space of more than twenty-five leagues. This was not regularly occupied, but both sides sent cavalry to reconnoitre it, which gave rise to sundry skirmishes. As in the neighbourhood of Polotsk there was abundant forage, the crops still standing, the soldiers, knowing that we should stay there for some time, set to work to reap and thresh the corn, grinding it afterwards in the little hand-mills, such as are found in every peasant's house. This appeared to me to be slow work, and I caused two water-mills on the Polota to be repaired, from which time my

regiment was sure of its bread. As for meat, the woods were full of beasts abandoned by their owners ; but since providing ourselves from these meant a daily hunt, I resolved to imitate a practice which I had seen with the Army of Portugal, and to form a regimental herd. I succeeded in a short time in getting together 700 or 800 beasts, putting them under the care of some dismounted chasseurs, whom I supplied with some of the horses of the country which were too small to be drafted into the ranks. I increased my herd by frequent raids, and it existed for several months, so that I was able to give the regiment as much meat as they wanted, and keep my troops, who were grateful for my care, in good health. I also looked after the horses, for which large sheds were constructed, thatched with straw and placed in the rear of the soldiers' huts, so that our bivouac was almost as comfortable as a camp in time of peace. The other colonels made similar arrangements, but none of them collected a herd, their soldiers living from hand to mouth.

I know that these details seem at first sight superfluous, but I recall them with pleasure, because the care which I took of my men saved the lives of many of them, and kept the effective strength of the 23rd Chasseurs far above that of any other cavalry regiment in the army corps. This gained me a testimony of the Emperor's satisfaction, of which I will speak later on. I took two other precautions which saved the lives of many of my troopers : the first was compelling them all to provide themselves with sheep-skin overcoats, such as were to be found in plenty in the deserted villages. Soldiers are big children, and one has to take care of them in spite of themselves. My men declared at first that these greatcoats were useless and overweighted their horses ; but by the time that October began they were very glad to put them under their cloaks, and when the great cold came on they thanked me for compelling them to keep them. My second precaution was to send to the rear of the army all troopers who had lost their horses by the enemy's fire, or by breaking down. There was a general order that all such men were to be sent to Lepel, in Lithuania, where they were to receive horses that were expected from Warsaw. I was preparing to obey this order, when I heard that the dépôt at Lepel was choked with dismounted troopers in great want, and having nothing to do, since no remounts had arrived. I therefore took it upon myself to send all my dismounted men direct to Warsaw under the command of Captain Poitevin, who had been wounded. After the campaign I picked them up



on the Vistula, all newly clothed, well-equipped, and with excellent horses, and they formed a capital reinforcement for the regiment. The dismounted men from other regiments who were collected at Lepel to the number of more than 9,000, overtaken by the retreat of the troops on the way from Moscow, were nearly all taken prisoners or died of cold on the road; yet it would have been easy to have sent them during the summer and autumn to Warsaw, where there were in the *dépôt* plenty of horses only wanting riders.

I had a good month's rest at Luchonski, which helped forward the cure of the wound that I had received in July at Jakobowo. In that camp we were well off from a material point of view, but very uneasy about what was going on in the direction of Moscow, and we very seldom got news from France. At length I received a letter from my dear Angélique, in which she announced that she had given birth to a boy. Great as was my joy it was mingled with sadness, for I was far from my family, and though I did not foresee all the dangers to which I was shortly to be exposed, I could not hide from myself that there were great obstacles in the way of our meeting again.

Towards the middle of September Marshal Saint-Cyr sent me on a very delicate errand. Its end was twofold: first to find out what the enemy was doing in the neighbourhood of Nevel, and then to return by the shores of Lake Ozerichtchi and speak with Count Lubenski, the greatest noble of the country, and one of the few Poles who were ready to do anything to shake off the Russian yoke.

The Emperor, who, while hesitating to proclaim the restoration of the old Poland, had wished to organize the parts already occupied into departments, had met with much opposition from the nobles to whom he had proposed to entrust the administration of them. However, after the assurances which he had received as to the patriotism of Count Lubenski, he had appointed him prefect of Witebsk. As he lived on an estate lying outside of the districts occupied by the French, it was difficult to get the announcement of his nomination to him, and Napoleon had therefore given orders that a body of light cavalry should be sent his way. The duty of carrying out this task having fallen to me, I picked 300 of the bravest and best-mounted men of my regiment, and, after duly victualling them, departed on September 14 from the camp at Luchonski, leaving there Castex's brigade and the rest of our squadrons. I took Lorenz with me to act as interpreter.

I need not relate in detail the incidents of no great interest which befell us; it will suffice to say that, thanks to the good counsel given us by the peasants, who were opposed to the Russians, we went all round the town of Nevel, avoiding the enemy's outposts, and after marching eight days, or rather eight nights, reached Lake Ozerichtchi, on the shores of which stood the handsome château belonging to Count Lubenski. I shall never forget our arrival at that ancient and immense mansion. A lovely autumn evening was lighted up by the moon. The count's family were assembled to celebrate his birthday and rejoice over Napoleon's success at the Moskwa, when the servants ran in announcing that the house was surrounded by soldiers, who had set outposts and sentinels, and were already entering the courtyards. They thought it was the Russian police come to arrest their master. He, being a man of courage, was calmly awaiting his removal to the prisons of St. Petersburg, when one of his sons, having opened a window through curiosity, remarked: "Those troopers are talking French." At these words Count Lubenski with his family and servants rushed out of the house. He assembled them under a large portico, and as I mounted the steps came towards me with open arms, exclaiming in tragic tones: "Welcome, generous Gaul, bringing liberty to my country, so long oppressed! Come, warrior of the great Napoleon, Poland's liberator, let me press thee to my heart!" Not only did the count embrace me; he insisted on the countess, his sons, and daughters doing the same. Then the chaplain, the tutors, the governesses kissed my hand, and the servants touched my knee with their lips. Astonished as I was at the various grades of honour which were rendered me, I received them with all the gravity at my command, and I imagined the scene at an end, when, at a word from the count, all fell prostrate in prayer.

We entered the château, and, handing Count Lubenski his appointment as prefect of Witebsk bearing the seal of the Emperor of the French, I asked if he accepted it.

"Yes," he cried vigorously, "and I am ready to follow you." The countess was no less enthusiastic, and it was settled that the count should start with me. I allowed an hour to prepare for the journey, which I need not say that my detachment employed in making a good supper, though in our fear of being surprised they were obliged to eat on horseback. Having taken our leave, we went four leagues further and slept in a forest, where we lay hidden all the next day. On the following night

we continued our march ; but in order to put the enemy, who might have been surprised at the presence of a French detachment in these regions, off the scent I carefully avoided taking the same road as I had followed when coming, and reached Polotsk in five days by way of Lombrowka, sometimes following paths, sometimes going across country. I was all the more thankful that I had returned by a different road when I learnt from some traders belonging to Nevel that the Russians had sent a regiment of dragoons and 600 Cossacks to look out for me, about the head waters of the Drissa, towards Krasnopol.

After reporting to Marshal Saint-Cyr, and presenting Count Lubenski to him, I returned to our bivouac at Luchonski, where I found General Castex and the rest of my regiment. My expedition had lasted thirteen days, during which we had incurred much fatigue and some privation, but I brought my people back in good condition. We had not had to fight, for such small bodies of the enemy as we had seen had all taken flight at the sight of us.

A few days after our return to Luchonski, I was much surprised to see a detachment of thirty troopers of my regiment arrive from France. They came from Mons, and had thus crossed Belgium, the Rhine provinces, all Germany, part of Prussia and Poland, and travelled more than 400 leagues under the command of a sergeant ; yet not a man had stayed behind, and not a horse was injured. This will serve to show the zealous spirit which animated the 23rd Chasseurs.

About October 12 the 2nd corps, which had been for two months living in abundance and tranquillity at Polotsk and the neighbourhood, had to get ready to take its chance of more fighting. We learnt that Admiral Tchichagoff, commanding the army of Wallachia, having through English mediation made peace with the Turks, was making for Mohileff with the view of falling on the Emperor's rear, while he was still at Moscow, and still lulling himself with the hope of making a treaty with Alexander. People were astonished that Prince Schwarzenberg, whose duty it was with 30,000 Austrians to watch the army of Wallachia, should have let Tchichagoff pass, but it was no less the fact. Not only had the Austrians omitted to close the way, as they might have done, to the Russians, but they had, instead of following them up, remained quiet in their cantonments in Volhynia.

While the Austrians on our right were opening the way to the Russian army coming from Turkey, the Prussians, who had

so imprudently been allowed to form our left wing, were also preparing to make terms with the enemy; and that almost openly, without any concealment from Marshal Macdonald, whom the Emperor had put at their head to keep them to their allegiance. As soon as they learnt that the occupation of Moscow had not led to peace, they foresaw the disasters of the French army, and all their hatred towards us awoke. They did not yet rebel openly, but Marshal Macdonald could not get his orders well obeyed, and the Prussians, who were cantoned near Riga, might at any moment join Wittgenstein's troops and overwhelm the French army encamped near Polotsk. It is clear how difficult Marshal Saint-Cyr's situation became, but this did not disturb him, and with his usual coolness he gave, calmly and clearly, his orders for an obstinate defence. The infantry was concentrated in the town and the entrenched camp, while several more bridges were thrown across the Dwina.

Repulsed on October 17, the enemy returned to the attack on the 18th, in such strength that, after suffering immense loss, Wittgenstein captured the entrenched camp. But Saint-Cyr, at the head of Legrand and Maison's divisions, drove him out with the bayonet. Seven times did the Russians return with fury to the charge, and seven times did the French and Croats repulse them, remaining in the end masters of all the positions. Marshal Saint-Cyr was wounded, but continued no less to direct the troops. His efforts were entirely successful, for the Russians left the field and retired into the forest, 50,000 men having been beaten by 15,000. Joy was general in the French camp; but on the 19th we heard that General Steingel, at the head of 14,000 Russians, had crossed the Dwina by Disna, and was marching up the left bank to turn Polotsk and enclose Saint-Cyr's army between his force and that of Wittgenstein. And ere long his advanced guard appeared before Natcha, making for Ekimania, where were our cuirassier division and the light cavalry regiments, the marshal having kept only a squadron of each at Polotsk.

In a moment we had mounted, and driven back the enemy, who would, however, have had the best of it in the end, as strong reinforcements were arriving and we had no infantry, had not Marshal Saint-Cyr sent three regiments from those guarding Polotsk. Then Steingel, whom an effort would have brought to the bridges, stopped short, while Wittgenstein, on the other bank, remained motionless. It seemed as if the two Russian generals, after having formed a well-conceived plan for a combined

attack, did not dare to carry it out, but were relying on each other to beat the French. Our position was nevertheless terribly critical; for those on the right bank were being forced back by Wittgenstein's army, threefold theirs in number, upon a town built wholly of wood and a large stream, and had no way of retreat open, save by the bridges which Steingel, on the left bank, was threatening. Then all the generals urged Saint-Cyr to evacuate Polotsk; but, knowing that the Russians only awaited the first sign of a retrograde movement to fall on his weakened army and throw it into disorder, he preferred to wait till night. Taking advantage, therefore, of the unexpected inertness of the enemy, he waited immovably for sunset. The arrival of this was luckily hastened by a thick fog, which hid each of the three armies from the others; and the marshal seized this favourable moment for retreat.

The numerous artillery and some squadrons which had remained on the right bank had silently crossed the bridges, and the infantry was about to slip away, when, at the moment of their departure, Legrand's men, unwilling to leave their huts to the Russians, set them on fire. The other two divisions, thinking that it was an arranged signal, did the like, and in an instant the whole line was in a blaze. The conflagration proclaimed our retreat to the Russians, their batteries opened, and their shells set fire to the suburbs as well as to the town. Their columns advanced upon it headlong, but the French defended the ground foot by foot, being able to see, by the light of the fire, as in broad day. Polotsk was burned to the ground, both sides lost heavily, but our troops retreated in good order. All the wounded who could be removed were brought away; the rest, and many of the Russians, perished in the flames.

Meanwhile, by the Emperor's orders, Marshal Victor, at the head of the 9th army corps, 25,000 strong, half of which belonged to the Confederation of the Rhine, was hurrying up from Smolensk to join Saint-Cyr, and throw Wittgenstein back across the Dwina. This plan would have taken effect promptly if Saint-Cyr had had the chief command, but Victor was the senior and Saint-Cyr, not wishing to serve under him, declared, the day after their meeting, which took place on October 31 before Smoliansky, that he could campaign no longer, and, handing over the command of the 2nd corps to General Legrand, departed for France. The troops regretted him, for, though they did not like him personally, they did justice to his courage and his wonderful military talent.

All that Saint-Cyr needed to be a consummate commander was a smaller share of egotism and the knowledge how to attach men and officers to him by attending to their wants. But no man is faultless.

The 23rd Chasseurs, posted at Zapole, was covering one flank of the united corps, when Marshal Victor, hearing that a large force of the enemy was at Vonisokoi-Ghorodie, ordered General Castex to reconnoitre this point with one of his regiments. It was the turn for mine to march. We started at nightfall, and reached Ghorodie without hindrance. The village stood in a bottom, on a large drained marsh. Everything was quiet, and the peasants whom I questioned through Lorenz had not seen a Russian soldier for a month. I therefore prepared to go back to Zapole; but our return was not as calm as our outward march had been. There was no fog, but the night was very dark, and I was afraid that the regiment was going astray among the numerous dykes in the marsh. I therefore took for guide one of the inhabitants of Ghorodie, who appeared less stupid than the others. My column had proceeded in good order for half an hour, when I suddenly perceived bivouac fires upon the hills surrounding the marsh. I halted my men, and sent out two intelligent sergeants to reconnoitre, bidding them try and avoid being seen. They soon came back, saying that a strong body was blocking our way, while another was in position in our rear. I turned round, and when I saw thousands of fires between me and Ghorodie it seemed clear that I had inadvertently got into the middle of an army corps, which was preparing to bivouac on the spot. The fires kept increasing in number; the plain and hills were soon covered with them, and presented the appearance of a camp of 50,000 men, in the midst of which was I with less than 700 troopers. The odds were great, but how were we to avoid the danger which threatened? The only way was to gallop forward in silence along the main dyke upon which we were, to surprise the enemy by a sudden charge, and cut our way through, sword in hand. Once out of the light of the camp-fires, the darkness would save us from pursuit. Having decided on this course, I sent officers all along the column to let the troops know, being certain that all would approve my plan and follow me resolutely. In the middle of my anxiety, the peasant who was guiding us burst into shouts of laughter, and Lorenz did the same. In vain did I question the latter, he could not stop laughing; and not knowing enough French to explain the unusual

circumstances, he showed me his cloak, on which had just settled one of the will-o'-the-wisps which we had taken for bivouac fires. The phenomenon was produced by the marsh emanations, which a slight frost following on a day of hot autumn sunshine had condensed. In a little time the whole regiment was covered with these fires, as large as eggs, at which the soldiers were much diverted. Thus relieved from one of the greatest frights that I had ever had, I returned to Zapole.

A few days later a fresh duty fell to me, in the course of which we had to face not will-o'-the-wisps, but the carbines of Russian dragoons. One day when General Castex had gone to Sienno to meet Marshal Victor, and my regiment was at Zapole, I saw two peasants arrive, and recognized in one of them Captain Bourgoing, an aide-de-camp of Oudinot's. That marshal, who, after being wounded at Polotsk on August 18, had gone to Wilna, having heard that Saint-Cyr had been wounded in his turn on October 18 and left the army, had decided to resume the command of the 2nd corps. Knowing that his troops were in the neighbourhood of Sienno, he was making for that town, when, on reaching Rasna, he was warned by a Polish priest that a party of Russian dragoons and Cossacks was prowling about. He heard, however, at the same time that there were French cavalry at Zapole, and resolved to write to the commander asking for a strong escort. The letter was sent by the hand of M. de Bourgoing, who, for greater security, disguised himself as a peasant. It was just as well he did, for he had hardly gone a league when he fell in with a strong force of Russian cavalry, who, thinking he was an inhabitant of the country, took no notice of him. A few moments later M. de Bourgoing heard firing, and hastened on to Zapole. On hearing from him of the marshal's critical position, I trotted off with my whole regiment to bring him speedy succour. It was high time for us to do so, for, although the marshal had barricaded himself in a stone house and was defending himself valiantly with the help of his aide-de-camp and a dozen French soldiers on their way back to the army, his position was about to be forced by the Russian dragoons, when we appeared. At the sight of us they remounted and took to flight. My troopers pursued them, killed a score of them, and took some prisoners, with a loss of two wounded. Marshal Oudinot expressed his gratitude, and my regiment escorted him till he reached the French cantonments and was out of danger.

At the time of which I speak all the marshals of the Empire

seemed determined to recognize no rights of seniority among themselves, for none would serve under one of his colleagues, however serious the occasion might be. When, therefore, Oudinot had resumed the command of the 2nd corps, Victor, rather than fight Wittgenstein under his orders, marched off with his 25,000 men towards Kokanoff. Thus left alone, Marshal Oudinot marched his troops about for several days in different parts of the province, and finally established his head-quarters at Tchereia with his advanced guard at Lukulen.

It was during a little fight which Castex's brigade had in front of that town that my promotion to colonel at last reached me. If you consider that as major I had received a wound at Znaym in Moravia, two at Miranda de Corvo, in Portugal, one at Jakobowo, had served four campaigns with that rank, and that I had been in command of a regiment ever since the French entered Russia, you will perhaps think that I had pretty well earned my new epaulettes. I was none the less grateful to the Emperor, especially when I learnt that I was still to have the 23rd Chasseurs, of whom I was very fond, and by whom I knew that I was both beloved and valued. In fact, there was great joy throughout the regiment, and the brave men whom I had so often led to battle came, men and officers alike, to express their satisfaction at keeping me as their commander. The kind General Castex, who had always treated me as a brother, himself announced my promotion at the head of the regiment. Lastly, the colonel of the 24th, although we were not very intimate, came at the head of all his officers to congratulate me.

Meanwhile the situation of the French army was getting worse every day. Field-Marshal Schwarzenberg, commander-in-chief of the Austrian corps which formed the right wing of the army, had by the basest treachery allowed Tchichagoff's troops to pass him; they had taken Minsk and were threatening our rear. The Emperor must have deeply regretted that he had entrusted the command of Lithuania to the Dutch general, Hogendorf, who, having seen nothing of war, did not know how to set about saving Minsk. The capture of that place was a serious matter; but the Emperor attached little importance to it, because he reckoned on passing the Beresina at Borisoff, where there was a bridge covered by a fortress in good condition and guarded by a Polish regiment. So great was Napoleon's confidence on this point that, in order to lighten the march of his army, he had had all his pontoons burned at Orcha. This was a great disaster, for they



would have assured us a ready passage over the Beresina, a passage which we had to buy at the cost of so much bloodshed. Secure as Napoleon felt with regard to this, on learning that Minsk was occupied by the Russians, he ordered Marshal Oudinot to come by forced marches to Borisoff; but we arrived too late, because General Bronikoffski, who was charged with the defence of the fort on the right bank, finding himself surrounded by large numbers of the enemy, thought to do a praiseworthy action by saving the garrison. Instead, therefore, of offering a stubborn resistance, which would have given Oudinot time to come to his relief, the Polish general abandoned the place, crossing with his whole garrison to the left bank and taking the road to Orcha, so as to rejoin Oudinot, which he did in front of Natcha. The marshal received him with displeasure, and ordered him to return with us towards Borisoff. Not only were the town, the bridge over the Beresina, and the fortress commanding it already in Tchichagoff's hands, but that general, who, after his success, was eager to fight the French troops, had started on November 23 to meet them with the greater part of his army, the advance-guard being commanded by General Lambert, the best of his lieutenants. The ground being level, Marshal Oudinot made the cuirassier division march at the head of his infantry, preceded by Castex's light cavalry brigade.

Three leagues from Borisoff the Russian advance-guard came in contact with our cuirassiers, who, having had very little fighting in the course of this campaign, had begged for the honour of being placed in the first line. At the sight of these five regiments, which were still strong and well mounted, the Russian cavalry stopped short. Recovering their courage, however, they advanced again. Then our cuirassiers with a furious charge overthrew them, killing or capturing a thousand men. Tchichagoff, who had been assured that Napoleon's army was by this time only a disorderly and unarmed crowd, was not prepared for such vigour, so he retreated in haste towards Borisoff. It usually happens that after executing a charge the big horses of the heavy cavalry, especially the cuirassiers, cannot go on galloping. It was, therefore, the 23rd and 24th Chasseurs who were ordered to pursue the enemy while the cuirassiers came on at a slackened pace in the second line.

Tchichagoff had not only committed the mistake of coming to meet Oudinot's corps, but he had also caused all the baggage wagons of his army, to the number of more than 1,500, to follow

him. So great, therefore, was the disorder in the headlong retreat of the Russians towards Borisoff, that Castex's two regiments often found their march hampered by the vehicles which the enemy had abandoned. This hindrance became still greater when we entered the town, the streets of which were crowded with baggage and draught horses, among which were streaming the Russian soldiers, who had thrown away their arms and were trying to get back to the Russian regiments. Still, we reached the middle of the town, but only after losing precious time by which the enemy profited to get across the river.\* The marshal's orders were to reach the bridge and try to cross it, together with the Russian fugitives; but in order to do this, it was necessary to know where the bridge was, and none of us was acquainted with the town. At length my troopers found a Jew, whom I questioned in German; but whether it was that the scamp did not understand that language, or pretended that he did not, we could get no information from him. I would have given a good deal to have had my Polish servant Lorenz with me, but the coward had remained behind when the fighting began. Still, we had to get out of the fix somehow; so we made several detachments explore the streets until at last they found the Beresina. That river was not yet sufficiently frozen for us to be able to cross it on the ice, so that it was necessary to pass over the bridge. But to take the bridge we required infantry, and ours was still three leagues off. Marshal Oudinot, who came up at this moment, ordered General Castex to supply its place by making three-quarters of his troopers dismount and attack the bridge formed into a little battalion armed with carbines. We hastened to obey, and, leaving our horses in the neighbouring streets guarded by a few men, made for the river, under the lead of General Castex, who chose to march to this perilous undertaking at the head of his brigade.

The recent discomfiture of the Russian advance-guard had carried alarm into Tchichagoff's army. Disorder prevailed on the bank which it occupied, where we could see masses of fugitives making off across the country. Thus, although it had at first seemed to me very hard work for dismounted troopers without bayonets to force a bridge and maintain themselves there, I began to hope for success when I saw that we were opposed by only a few skirmishers. I therefore ordered the section who should first reach the right bank to capture houses near the bridge, so that holding both ends of it we could defend it till our infantry

\* [Tchichagoff's memoirs fully confirm all these details.]

came up, and thus secure the passage of the Beresina for the French army. But the guns of the fort began to thunder, and the bridge was swept by a storm of grape which threw our feeble battalion into disorder, and forced it for a moment to recoil. A band of Russian pioneers armed with torches took advantage of this moment to set the bridge on fire ; but, as their presence caused the enemy's artillery to cease firing, we hurled ourselves on them, killing or throwing into the river the greater number of them. The chasseurs had put out the fire, which had hardly caught, when a battalion of grenadiers came up at the double, and forced us at the bayonet's point to abandon the bridge, which was presently covered with lighted torches, and became a huge furnace, until its blazing heat compelled both sides to draw off. Thenceforth the French had to renounce all hope of crossing the Beresina by that bridge, and their retreat was cut off. This terrible calamity decided our fate and aided vastly to bring down Napoleon's throne and change the face of Europe.

By the custom of war, enemy's baggage belongs to the captors. General Castex therefore authorized the men of the 23rd and 24th to take possession of the plunder contained in the 1,500 vehicles of all kinds which the Russians had left behind when they fled across the bridge. The booty was immense—a hundred times more, indeed, than the brigade could carry. So I assembled my regiment, and pointed out that as they had a long retreat before them, during which it would probably be impossible for us to continue distributing rations of meat, as I had done throughout the campaign, they had better take steps chiefly to supply themselves with provisions. I added that they should also think of protecting themselves against the cold ; and that as overladen horses do not last long, they must not break theirs down with all sorts of things of no use in war. To sum up, I said that I should hold an inspection, and that all that was not food, shoes, or clothing would be rejected without mercy. To avoid all discussion, General Castex had had stakes planted, to divide the captured carriages into two divisions, and each regiment had its own. As the town was surrounded on three sides by Oudinot's army, while the fourth side was covered by the Beresina and watched by pickets, our men could safely investigate the contents of the Russian carts and carriages. So when the word was given the search began. It seemed that Tchichagoff's officers took good care of themselves, for never in the equipage of an army was seen such a profusion of hams, pies, smoked fish and meat, and

wines of all kinds, not to mention ship's biscuit, rice, cheese, etc. Our soldiers also benefited by the furs and strong boots which they found in the wagons, the capture of which thus saved many a man's life. The drivers had not even had time to take away their horses, and as these were nearly all good, we selected the best to replace any with which our troopers found fault. The officers also took some to carry the provisions with which each had so amply furnished himself.

On the 25th the Emperor entered Borisoff, where he found Marshal Oudinot waiting with the 6,000 men who remained to him. Napoleon and the marshals and officers who accompanied him were surprised to see the good order maintained in the 2nd corps, the bearing of which formed a remarkable contrast to that of the miserable bands whom they were bringing back from Moscow. Our troops did not look so nice, indeed, as they would in a garrison town, but each man had kept his weapons and was ready to make a brave use of them. The Emperor, struck by their martial air, called together all the colonels and bade them express to their regiments his satisfaction at their excellent conduct in all the sanguinary engagements fought in the province of Polotsk.

Napoleon was soon giving his orders. Marshal Oudinot was to take his corps in the night to Studzianka to allow of the construction of two bridges there, and then to cross to the right bank and form between Zembin and the river. Victor was to start from Natcha, and, forming the rear-guard, to drive all stragglers in front of him, try to defend Borisoff for a few hours, and then make for Studzianka and cross the bridges. Such were the Emperor's orders, but events prevented them from being accurately carried out.

At daybreak on the 26th we were at Studzianka. No preparations for defence were to be seen on the further bank, so that if the Emperor had kept the pontoons which he had burnt a few days before, the army might have crossed the Beresina on the spot. That river, which has been imaginatively described as of enormous width, is at most as wide as the Rue Royale at Paris, opposite the Ministry of Marine. As for its depth, it will be enough to say that the three cavalry regiments of Corbineau's brigade had forded it without any mishap three days before, and did so again. Their horses either never lost the bottom or had at most to swim two or three fathoms. At that moment the passage could be made by cavalry wagons or artillery, with slight

inconvenience, the chief being that troopers and drivers had the water up to their knees, which was quite bearable, as the cold was, unfortunately, not enough to freeze the river, and there was little ice even floating down ; a few degrees lower would have been all the better for us. The second inconvenience was also a result of the absence of severe cold ; for the swampy meadow on the further bank was so muddy that saddle-horses could only cross it with difficulty, while wagons went in up to the axle-trees.

*Espirt de corps* is no doubt highly praiseworthy, but one should be able to hold it in check or forget it in difficult circumstances. This was more than the artillery and engineer commanders could do at the Beresina. Each of these corps claimed the sole right to build the bridges, with the result that they got in each other's way, and no progress had been made when the Emperor arrived about noon on the 26th. He settled the difficulty by ordering that each should build one bridge. Beams and laths were at once torn from the hovels in the village, and sappers and gunners fell to work. Then those brave men gave a proof of devotion, for which credit enough has not been given them. They leapt into the cold water of the Beresina and worked there for six or seven hours, though there was not a drop of spirits to give them, and they had no bed to look forward to for the following night, but a field covered with snow. They nearly all died when the great frost came.

While the construction of the bridges was going on, and my regiment with all the 2nd corps was on the left bank, awaiting the order to cross the river, the Emperor was striding about, accompanied by Murat, going from one regiment to another, and talking to men as well as officers. Murat, the brave and dashing soldier, who had performed such fine feats of arms when the French were marching victoriously on Moscow, had been, as it were, under an eclipse ever since they had left that town, and during this time had taken no part in any fighting. Men saw him following the Emperor about in silence, as though a stranger to all that was going on. When, however, he came in sight of the Beresina, and the only hope which had maintained their discipline, and now formed the last hope of safety, he seemed to awake from his torpor. Being very fond of the cavalry, and seeing that, of all the squadrons which had crossed the Niemen, those of Oudinot's corps alone remained, he diverted the Emperor's steps towards them. Napoleon was in ecstasies at the fine condition of the troops in general, and of my regiment in particular, for it was

indeed stronger than many brigades. In fact, I still had more than 500 men mounted, while the other colonels of the army corps had, none of them, more than 200. I received, therefore, most flattering congratulations from the Emperor, in which my officers and men shared largely.

But to return to the passage of the Beresina. Not only did all our horses cross the river easily, but the canteen-men got over with their light carts, which made me think that it might be possible to unharness some of the numerous wagons which followed the army, and fixing them in the river one behind another to form in this way footways for the infantry.

On the evening of the 27th the Emperor with his guard crossed the river and established himself at Zavniski. The enemy had not yet shown. Much has been said of the disasters which took place at the Beresina; but what has never yet been said is, that the greater part of them might have been saved if the head-quarters staff had understood its duties better, and taken advantage of the night of the 27th to get all the baggage and, still more, the thousands of stragglers who next day blocked the way across the bridges. After settling my regiment in its bivouac at Zavniski, I noticed the absence of a pack-horse which carried our regimental cash-box and account-books, and therefore could not be allowed to run the risks of the ford. I thought, therefore, that his driver and the troopers who escorted him had waited till the bridges were finished. This they had been for some hours, and yet the men did not appear. Then, being anxious about them as well as about the important property which was entrusted to them, I thought I would go myself and assist them to cross, for I supposed that there was a block on the bridges. I galloped off, therefore, and what was my surprise to find them completely deserted. At that moment no one was crossing, while a hundred paces away I could see by the bright moonlight more than 50,000 stragglers and soldiers separated from their regiments—*rôbisseurs* as they were called. These men, sitting calmly in front of enormous fires, were grilling horseflesh without a notion that they had in front of them a river, the passage of which would cost many of them their lives on the next day, while they could at the present time cross it without hindrance in a few minutes, and finish preparing their supper on the other bank. Not one officer of the imperial household, not one aide-de-camp, not a single marshal, was there to warn those poor wretches, and, if necessary, to drive them to the bridges. It was in this disorderly camp that I saw for the

first time soldiers returning from Moscow ; it was a heart-breaking sight. All ranks were confounded ; there were no arms, no military bearings ; soldiers, officers, even generals were clad in rags, and for boots had nothing but strips of leather or cloth hardly fastened together with string—a huge rabble, in which thousands of men of different nations were jumbled, shouting in every language of the continent of Europe, and unable to understand each other. Yet if in Oudinot's corps or in the guard some of the battalions had been selected which still kept their discipline, they might easily have driven the mass across the bridges. I myself, when returning to Zavniski, having only a few orderlies with me, succeeded, partly by persuasion, partly by force, in making 2,000 or 3,000 of the poor wretches cross to the right bank ; but other duties called me, and I had to rejoin my regiment.

## CHAPTER XXXII

*WE HAVE* now reached the most terrible moment in the fatal Russian campaign, the passage of the Beresina, which took place chiefly on November 28. When this ill-omened day dawned the position of the two armies was as follows. On the left bank Marshal Victor's corps, having evacuated Borisoff during the night, had reached Studzianka with the 9th corps, driving a crowd of stragglers before it. The marshal had left to act as rear-guard General Partouneaux's infantry division, which, having been ordered not to evacuate the town till two hours later, ought to have sent out several small detachments to follow the army corps, and so being connected with the main body by a line of scouts, as it were, to stake out the direction. Besides this the general ought to have sent an aide-de-camp to Studzianka to reconnoitre the roads and come back to meet the division. But Partouneaux neglected all these precautions, and contented himself with marching at the appointed hour. He came to where two roads forked, and he knew neither of them ; but as he could not have been ignorant, coming from Borisoff, that the Beresina was on his left, he might have concluded that in order to reach Studzianka, which was on the river, it was the left-hand road that he ought to take. He did just the contrary, and, mechanically following some light infantry who were in advance, he got on to the right-hand road and walked straight into the

middle of Wittgenstein's army. The division was quickly surrounded and compelled to lay down its arms.\* Meanwhile, a major who was in command of the rear-guard, having had the good sense to take the road to the left, simply because it would bring him to the river, rejoined Marshal Victor at Studzianka. Great was the marshal's surprise when he saw this one battalion come up instead of Partouneaux's division. But his surprise changed to bewilderment when he was attacked by Wittgenstein's Russians, whom he supposed Partouneaux to be holding in check. Then Victor could no longer doubt that that general and all his regiments were taken.

During this confusion and fighting at Studzianka, the enemy, who aimed at getting possession of both ends of the bridges, were on the right bank, attacking Oudinot's corps, posted in front of Zawniski. Tchichagoff's 30,000 men, issuing from Stakovo, advanced with loud shouts against the 2nd corps, which could not number more than 8,000. But as our soldiers had not come into contact with those who were returning from Moscow, and had no idea of the disorder prevailing among those poor wretches, the tone of Oudinot's corps had remained excellent, and Tchichagoff was vigorously repulsed under the Emperor's eyes. He himself arrived at the moment with 3,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry of the guard, old and young. The Russians renewed their attack and broke the Polish Legion of the Vistula. Oudinot was severely wounded, and Napoleon sent Ney to take his place. General Coudras, a good infantry officer, was killed, and the valiant General Legrand dangerously wounded. This action took place in a wood of huge firs. The enemy's artillery was thus prevented from getting a good sight of our troops, so that its volleys did not touch us; but as the shot flew over our heads they broke off branches thicker than a man's body, which killed and wounded many of our people and many horses in their fall. As the trees stood wide apart the cavalry could move among them, though with difficulty; in spite of which Ney, on seeing a strong Russian column advancing, launched what was left of our cuirassiers against them. Though executed under these unwonted conditions, that charge was one of the most brilliant I ever saw. Colonel Dubois, at the head of the 7th Cuirassiers, cut the enemy's column in two, taking 2,000 prisoners. Thus thrown into confusion, the

\* [General Partouneaux made an heroic resistance, and before his division surrendered it was reduced to a few hundred combatants (see Thiers' "History of the Consulate and Empire").]



Russians were pursued by the light cavalry, and driven back with immense loss even to Stakovo.

As I was re-forming my regiment after this engagement, I saw my friend M. Alfred de Noailles coming towards me. He was coming back from carrying an order from Prince Berthier, to whom he was aide-de-camp; but, instead of returning to his chief, he said as he left me that he would go as far as the first houses of Stakovo to see what the enemy were doing. His curiosity was fatal to him, for, as he drew near the village, he was surrounded by a group of Cossacks, who threw him from his horse and dragged him along by the collar, striking him as they went. I sent at once a squadron to his assistance, but my effort was fruitless, for a brisk fire from the houses prevented the troopers from entering the village, and from that day nothing was ever heard of M. de Noailles. No doubt his richly-furred uniform with its gold lace had excited the cupidity of the barbarians, and they had butchered him. His family, hearing that I was the last Frenchman to whom he had spoken, asked me for information about his disappearance, but I could give them no more than I have told here. He was an excellent officer and a good comrade.

Having thus explained briefly the position of the armies on the two banks of the Beresina, I must say a few words as to what was taking place upon the river while the fighting was going on. The masses of unattached men—who had had two nights and days to cross the bridges, and who, in their apathy, had not taken advantage of them because no one compelled them to do so—wanted to cross all at once as soon as Wittgenstein's cannon-balls began to drop among them. The vast multitude of men, horses, and wagons got completely clubbed at the entrance of the bridges, blocking them without being able to reach them. Many were pushed by the crowd into the Beresina, and of these nearly all were drowned. As a crowning disaster, one of the bridges broke under the weight of the guns and ammunition wagons. All then made for the other bridge, where the confusion was already so great that the strongest could not withstand the crush, and a great number were suffocated. Seeing the impossibility of crossing the encumbered bridges, many of the wagon drivers urged their horses into the stream. But this method of crossing, which would have been very useful if it had been carried out in an orderly way two days before, was fatal to almost all who attempted it, because, pushing wildly forward, they hustled and overturned each other. Still, some reached the opposite bank, but as

nothing had been done to prepare a landing by sloping away the banks—as the staff ought to have done—few vehicles succeeded in getting up, and many people perished there also.

During the night of the 28th, these horrors were increased by the Russian guns playing upon the wretches who were struggling to cross the river. At nine in the evening the cup of misery was overflowing, when Marshal Victor began his retreat, and his divisions came up to the bridge in good order, but could only reach it by forcibly pushing aside all who obstructed their passage. But let us draw a veil over these horrible scenes. At daybreak on the 29th all the vehicles remaining on the left bank were burnt; and when General Eblé saw the Russians approaching the bridge, he had that also set on fire. Some thousands of poor fellows who remained near Studzianka fell into Wittgenstein's hands. Thus ended the most terrible episode of the Russian campaign, an event which would have been far less disastrous if anyone had known how to make use of the time which the Russians allowed us after reaching the Beresina, and had chosen to do so. In that passage the army lost from 20,000 to 25,000 men.

Since Marshal Oudinot and General Legrand had been wounded, General Maison had been in command of the 2nd corps, which in spite of its heavy losses was the most numerous in the whole army, so that the task of beating off the Russians usually fell to it. We kept them at a distance during November 30 and December 1; but on the 2nd they pressed us so close with powerful forces that some serious fighting took place, in which I received a wound that was all the more dangerous from the fact that there were that day twenty-five degrees of frost.\*

The vigorous repulse with which the Russian troops had met in the recent action damped their ardour, so that we saw nothing more of them for two days, and our retreat to Malodeczno was secured. But if the enemy left us a moment's peace, the frost waged bitter war with us, for the thermometer fell to 27 degrees of cold. Men and horses were dropping at every step—many never to rise again. Still I remained with the fragments of my regiment, bivouacking in their midst every night in the snow. Where, indeed, should I have been any better off? My officers and men, who looked upon their colonel as a living flag, made it a point of honour to save me, and took all the care of me that our terrible situation allowed. The wound in my knee prevented me from riding astride, so that I had to put my leg on the horse's

\* [Centigrade; that is, 13 degs below zero Fahrenheit.]

withers and sit quite still, which made me very cold, my pain being intolerable ; but what could I do ?

The way was strewn with dead and dying ; our march was slow and silent. The remains of the infantry of the guard formed a small square, within which went the Emperor's carriage. He had Murat beside him. On December 5, after issuing his twenty-ninth bulletin, which threw France into a state of dismay, Napoleon left the army at Smorgony, and set out for Paris. At Ochmiany he was nearly carried off by Cossacks. His departure produced a great effect on the troops : some blamed him for deserting them ; others approved the course as the sole means of saving France from civil war and an invasion by our so-called allies, most of whom were only awaiting a favourable moment to declare against us. They would not dare to stir when they heard that Napoleon had re-entered his realm, and was organizing a new army. This was the view which I shared, and events showed the justice of it.

The Emperor, at his departure, entrusted the command of his shattered army to Murat, who showed himself unequal to the task—one as difficult, it may be admitted, as can be imagined. Everyone's faculties of mind and body were paralysed by the cold, and disorganization prevailed throughout. Victor refused to relieve the 2nd corps, which had been acting as rear-guard from the Beresina, and Ney had much trouble in making him do so. Every morning we left thousands of dead in our bivouacs. Then I congratulated myself on having in September made my troopers set themselves up with sheepskin coats, a precaution to which many of them owed their lives. So with the victuals with which we had supplied ourselves at Borisoff, for without these we should have had to fight for dead horses with the famished multitude. On this point I may say that M. de Ségur exaggerates when he says that the poor wretches were driven by the pangs of hunger to eat human flesh.\* The road was so lined with dead horses that no one needed to think of cannibalism. Further, it would be a great mistake to suppose that provisions were altogether

\* [“ Some wretches flung themselves into the blazing heaps ; their famished comrades looked on unterrified ; there were even some who dragged out the disfigured and roasted bodies, and it is too true that they dared to fill their mouths with this revolting food ” (De Ségur). Sir Robert Wilson (*Private Journal*) states that he saw “ a group of wounded men lying over the body of a comrade which they had roasted, and the flesh of which they had begun to eat.” This was before the Beresina.]

lacking in the district. They only ran short in the places actually on the road, since the neighbourhood of these had been drained when the army was on its way to Moscow ; but it had swept by like a torrent without spreading laterally, and the harvest had since been gathered, so that the country had in some measure recovered and, by going a league or two to one side, a fair amount could be found.

On December 6, the cold got far more intense, and that day was even more fatal than the preceding, especially for the troops who had not become gradually acclimatized. Among these was Gratien's division, consisting of conscripts to the number of 12,000, which had left Wilna on the 4th and come to meet us. The abrupt change from hot barracks to a bivouac with 29½ degrees of frost caused the death of nearly all these poor fellows within forty-eight hours. Still more terrible was the effect produced on 200 Neapolitan troopers of Murat's guard. They also had stayed a long time at Wilna when they came to meet us, but the first night which they passed on the snow killed them all. Those who were left of the Germans, Italians, Spaniards, and other foreigners whom he had brought into Russia saved their lives by a means repugnant to the French ; they deserted, took refuge in the villages near the road, and waited till the enemy came up. This often did not occur for several days, for, strange as it may seem, the Russian soldiers, accustomed as they are to pass the winter in houses where draughts are always excluded and stoves are always lighted, are far more sensitive to cold than those of any other country, and the heavy losses which the enemy incurred from this cause explained the slackness of the pursuit. We did not understand why Kutusoff and his generals merely followed us with a weak advance-guard, instead of hurling themselves on our flanks, overlapping us, and thus cutting off our retreat. So intense was the cold that we could see a kind of vapour rising from men's ears and eyes. Condensing on contact with the air, this vapour fell back on our persons with a rattle such as grains of millet might have made. We had often to halt, and clear away from the horses' bits the icicles formed by their frozen breath.

Thousands of Cossacks, meanwhile, attracted by the hope of plunder, endured the inclemency of the weather, and kept alongside of our columns, having even the audacity to attack them at the points where they saw the baggage. A few shots, however, were enough to drive them away. Finally, in order to give us trouble without any danger to themselves—since we had been obliged

for want of teams to leave all our artillery behind—the Cossacks placed light guns on sledges, and with these fired at our men until they saw a detachment coming in their direction, when they made off with all speed. These partial attacks, which did us, indeed, little harm, became very disagreeable by continued repetition. Many of our sick and wounded were taken and plundered by these marauders, some of whom acquired immense booty.

On December 9, we reached Wilna, where there were still some stores, but the Duke of Bassano and General Hogendorf had retired to the Niemen, and there was no one to give orders. There, as at Smolensk, the commissaries required, before giving out provisions and clothing, that regular receipts should be handed to them, a thing which, in the disorganized state of all the regiments, was impossible to do, and thus precious time was lost. General Maison had several store-houses broken open, and his troops got some food and clothing, but the rest was taken the next day by the Russians. Soldiers from the other corps went about the town in the hope of being taken in by the inhabitants, but the people who, six months before, had been longing for the French closed their houses as soon as they saw them in trouble. The Jews alone received those who could pay for this fleeting hospitality. Thus repulsed alike from the stores and from private houses, the great majority of the famished men made their way to the hospitals, which were soon crammed to overflowing, although there was not food enough there for all the poor people; but at least they were sheltered from the cold. Yet this precarious advantage decided more than 20,000 sick and wounded, among them 200 officers and eight generals, to go no further; they were utterly exhausted in mind and body. Lieutenant Hernoux, one of the stoutest and bravest officers in my regiment, was so distracted by what he had seen in the last few days that he laid himself down on the snow, and, no persuasions being able to make him rise, died there. Many soldiers of all ranks blew out their brains to put an end to their misery.

In the night of December 9, with 30 degrees of frost, some Cossacks came and fired shots at the gates of Wilna. Many people thought that it was Kutusoff's whole army, and in their terror left the town precipitately. I regret to have to say that King Murat was among the number. He departed without leaving any orders, but Marshal Ney remained and organized the retreat as best he could. We evacuated Wilna on the morning of the 10th, leaving there a great number of men, a park of

artillery, and a portion of the treasure. Scarcely were we out of Wilna when the infamous Jews threw themselves on the French whom they had taken into their houses to get out of them what little money they had, stripped them of their clothing, and pitched them naked out of window. Some officers of the Russian advance guard, who were entering at the moment, were so angry at this atrocity that they had many of the Jews killed. In the midst of this tumult Marshal Ney had taken all whom he could set in motion along the road to Kovno, but he had hardly gone a league when he came to the heights of Ponari. This hill, which in ordinary circumstances the column would have crossed without noticing, became a serious obstacle, since the ice had made the road so slippery that the horses were unable to drag the wagons up it. What remained of the treasure was therefore on the point of falling into the hands of the Cossacks, when Marshal Ney gave orders to have the chests opened and to let the men help themselves. This prudent step, the motive of which M. de Ségur probably did not know, led him to say that the troops plundered the imperial treasure.

Some days before our arrival at Wilna, many horses of my regiment having died from the intense cold, while it was impossible to mount those that remained, all my troopers marched on foot. I should have been very glad to be able to do the like, but as my wound did not allow of this I got a sledge and harnessed one of my horses to it. This gave me the idea that I might by the same means save my sick, who now were numerous, and as in Russia a sledge can be found in the poorest house, I soon had a hundred, each of which, drawn by a troop horse, brought away two men. General Castex thought this manner of travelling so convenient that he authorized me to put all the other troopers in sledges. Major Monginot, who had become colonel of the 24th Chasseurs since M. A—— had been promoted to general, received the same permission, and all that remained of our brigade harnessed its horses and formed a caravan which marched in perfect order.

The road was covered with muskets which had been thrown away, and our troopers took two apiece and a plentiful stock of cartridges, so that when the Cossacks ventured too near they were met by a brisk fire which quickly drove them off. When necessary, our men fought on foot; and in the evening we formed the sledges into a square, and lit our fires inside it. Marshal Ney and General Maison often came to pass the night there, finding it a safe place so long as we were pursued only by Cossacks. Doubtless it was the first time that a rear-guard had gone in

sledges ; but owing to the frost it was the only practicable method, and it answered.

Thus we continued covering the retreat till December 13, when we at length saw once more the Niemen and Kovno, the last Russian town. Five months before we had entered the Empire of the Czar at the same spot. What a change had since then taken place in our fortunes, and what had been the loss of the French army ! When the rear-guard entered Kovno, Marshal Ney found a weak battalion of 400 Germans doing duty as the only garrison. With these he joined such troops as were left to him, in order to defend the place as long as possible, and enable the sick and wounded to get away into Prussia. On hearing that Ney was coming, Murat went away to Gumbinnen.

We were now in Prussia, among allies. But Ney, worn out with fatigue, unwell, and, moreover, considering that the campaign was over, left us at once, and joined the other marshals at Gumbinnen. Thenceforth the army had no longer a commander, and the remains of each regiment marched independently through Prussia. The Russians, being at war with that country, had the right to follow us on to its territory ; but content with having reconquered their own, and not knowing whether they should appear in Prussia as allies or as enemies, they thought it best to await orders from their Government, and halted at the Niemen. Their hesitation gave us time to reach the towns of Prussia Proper.

Germans are for the most part humane, and many of them had friends or relations in the regiments which had gone with the French to Moscow. They received us well, and I must admit that, after sleeping for five months under the stars, it was delightful to find myself in a warm room and a good bed. But this rapid transition from an icy bivouac to comforts so long forgotten made me seriously ill. Nearly all the army suffered from the same cause ; and we lost many, including Generals Eblé and Lariboisière of the artillery.

My regiment crossed the Vistula, near the fortress of Graudenz, which we had passed on our way to Russia. This time the crossing was very dangerous, for, as a thaw had taken place some leagues higher up, the ice was a good foot deep in water, and ominous crackings were heard foretelling a general break-up. The order to cross instantly reached me, moreover, in the middle of a dark night ; for the general had just learnt that the King of Prussia had left Berlin and fled into Silesia, that the people were getting uneasy, and there was reason to fear that they would.

rise against us as soon as the break-up of the ice prevented us from crossing the Vistula. It was, therefore, absolutely necessary to face the danger. This was very great, for the river is very wide opposite Graudenz, and the ice was full of wide cracks which could only be seen with difficulty by the light of fires kindled on both banks. As it was useless to think of taking our sledges across, we left them behind; and, leading the horses, preceded by men with poles to notify the cracks, we began our perilous crossing. We were up to mid-leg in half-frozen water, which made things worse for the sick and wounded; but bodily pain was nothing to the fear caused by the cracking of the ice, which threatened every moment to give way under our feet. A servant of one of my officers fell into a hole and never reappeared. At last we reached the other bank, where we passed the night warming ourselves in fishermen's huts. Next day we saw the Vistula thaw completely, so that if we had delayed a few hours we should all have been made prisoners.

From the spot where we crossed the Vistula my regiment proceeded to the little town of Sweld, where it was cantoned before the war, and there I began the year 1813. That which was just over had surely been the most painful of my life.

The losses of the Grand Army during the campaign were immense, but yet they have been much exaggerated. I have already said that I saw in General Gourgaud's possession a "state" written all over with notes in Napoleon's hand, from which it appears that the number of men who crossed the Niemen was 155,400 French and 170,500 allies. On the return the Prussian and Austrian contingents went bodily over to the enemy, and nearly all the other allies had deserted individually during the retreat. An approximate calculation of the French loss cannot therefore be obtained by striking a balance between the effective force with which they entered on the campaign and that which remained when they crossed the Niemen for the second time. Now, from the "states" presented in February 1813 it appears that 60,000 French recrossed the Niemen; so that 95,000 were missing. Of these 30,000 had been taken prisoners, and returned home after the peace in 1814. The total loss, therefore, by death of actual French was 65,000.\*

\* [M. Thiers works out the figures of our losses as follows: 420,000 men crossed the Niemen, raised by subsequent reinforcements to 533,000; so that, of French and allies together, 300,000 must, according to him, have perished.]



The proportion of loss in my regiment was far smaller. When the campaign opened the 23rd Chasseurs were 1,018 all told. Thirty more joined at Polotsk, bringing the total up to 1,048. Out of these I had 109 killed, 77 captured, 65 maimed, and 104 missing—355 in all; so that on the return of the troopers whom I had sent to Warsaw after the campaign, the regiment, when sent on beyond the Elbe in February 1813, could muster 693 mounted men, who had all shared in the Russian campaign. When the Emperor, who was at Paris looking after the reorganization of the army, saw these figures he thought that there must be some mistake, and sent back my report, with orders to have a correct one made out. The second agreed with the first; whereupon the Emperor ordered General Sébastiani to inspect my regiment and draw up a "state" of all the men present *by name*. All doubts being set at rest by this operation, and my statement confirmed, I received a few days later from the adjutant-general a letter in terms most flattering to the officers, and above all to myself. It was to the effect that Prince Berthier was instructed by the Emperor to express his Majesty's satisfaction for the care which we had taken of our men. The Emperor knew that the 23rd had not been to Moscow, and accordingly did not compare its loss with that of the regiments who had reached that point, but founded his estimate on that of the 2nd army corps, which, having been placed in similar conditions, should have lost only in the same proportion. He found, however, that the 23rd, though it had been more exposed than the other regiments to the enemy's fire, was the one which had brought back the greatest number of men; a result which his Majesty ascribed to the zeal of its colonel, its officers, and non-commissioned officers, no less than to the excellent tone of its men.

After reading out this letter in the presence of all the squadrons, I intended to keep it as a glorious heirloom for my family; but was withheld by a scruple of which you will doubtless approve. It appeared scarcely seemly to deprive the regiment of a document, which, as it contained the proof of the Emperor's satisfaction with all, belonged to all. I therefore placed Berthier's letter among the regimental archives. I have repented this delicate attention; for almost before a year was out, the Government of Louis XVIII, on coming into power in 1814, amalgamated the 23rd Chasseurs with the 3rd of the same arm. The archives of the two corps were at first put together and badly looked after, until, at the general reduction of the army in 1815, they were

lost in the vast gulf of the War Office. After the revolution of 1830 I got the adjutant-general to look for the letter ; but it was in vain : I never succeeded in recovering it.

During our stay on the left bank of the Elbe the French army continued short of cavalry, except for a few regiments of which mine was one. We were quartered in several villages not far from Magdeburg. While there I experienced a great disappointment. The Emperor, wishing to quicken the organization of the new levies, and thinking that the presence of the regimental commanders at the dépôts of their regiments would be useful for this purpose, decided that all colonels who had less than a certain number of men—for cavalry 400—under arms should return to France. As I had more than 600, I was obliged to stay, but I should have been glad to embrace my wife and the child which had been born while I was away. To the pain which this caused me was added another great annoyance : the good General Castex, to whom I had occasion to be so grateful during the Russian campaign, left us for the mounted grenadiers of the guard. General Corbineau had been appointed aide-de-camp to the Emperor, and the two brigades were combined under General Exelmans ; General Wathiez replaced General Castex, and General Maurin, Corbineau. But as these three generals had gone to France after the campaign, and I was the only colonel at hand, General Sébastiani, to whose corps the new division was to belong, put me in command of it. This gave me much extra duty, since I had in terrible weather often to visit the cantonments of the three other regiments. My wound in the knee, though it had closed, still gave me pain, and I do not know how I should have carried on my duties to the end of the winter had not General Wathiez rejoined at the end of a month and taken command.

A few days after this, without any request on my part, I received orders to repair to France and organize the recruits and remounts which were in great numbers at the dépôt of my regiment. This was at Mons, in Belgium, which then formed part of the Empire. I started at once and travelled quickly, and as I knew that, having been authorized to come to France on duty, I could not properly ask for any leave to go to Paris, I accepted the offer of my mother-in-law, Mme. Desbrières, to bring my wife and child to Mons. After a year of separation and all that danger, it was a great pleasure to see my wife again, and for the first time to kiss our little Alfred, now eight months old. It was one of the happiest days

of my life. You may imagine with what joy I recalled how nearly my child had become an orphan on the day of his birth.

I remained at the dépôt, very busy, till the end of June. The recruits were very numerous, fine men, and of a warlike race, coming nearly all from the neighbourhood of Mons, in the old province of Hainault, whence Austria, in the days when the Low Countries belonged to her, used to draw her best troopers. The inhabitants of this district are fond of horses, and take good care of them ; but as those of the country were rather too powerful for chasseurs, I got leave to buy them in the Ardennes, and we were well remounted. Out of these elements I soon formed some squadrons, which doubtless were not perfect, but which could take their places, without too great contrast, among the veteran troopers whom I had left on the Elbe ; and as soon as a squadron was ready it went off to the army.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

*WHILE* I was actively engaged in reconstituting my regiment, most of the colonels, especially those of the cavalry, being detained in France on the same duty, the allies crossed the Elbe and hostilities recommenced. The Emperor had left Paris, and on April 25 was at Naumberg in Saxony, at the head of 170,000 men. Only a third of these were French, since some of the troops who had recently been sent forward to Germany had not yet reached the seat of war. The remaining two-thirds were formed by the contingents from the Confederation of the Rhine, the greater part of whom were little inclined to fight for Napoleon. These, to the number of 300,000, appeared on April 28 before Napoleon's army in the neighbourhood of Leipzig.

On May 1 a brisk engagement took place at Poserna, in the plain rendered famous by the death of Gustavus Adolphus, and Marshal Bessières was killed by a cannon-ball. The Emperor regretted him more than did the army, which had never forgotten that it was through his advice that Napoleon had been hindered on the evening of the battle of the Moskwa from bringing his guard into action and thus completing his victory, whereby the aspect of events would have been changed and the complete destruction of the Russian troops brought about. On the day after Marshal Bessières' death, while Napoleon was continuing his march on

Leipzig, he was unexpectedly attacked in flank by the allies, who had crossed the river Elster before daybreak. This battle, which was known as Lutzen, was keenly contested. The troops recently arrived from France fought with the utmost valour, the marine regiments being especially distinguished. The enemy were beaten at all points, and withdrew towards the Elbe; but the French, having scarcely any cavalry, could take but few prisoners, so that their victory was incomplete. Nevertheless, it produced a great moral effect all over Europe and especially in France, as showing that our troops had preserved all their superiority, and that nothing but the frosts of Russia had vanquished them in 1812.

The Emperor Alexander and the King of Prussia, who, after having witnessed the defeat of their armies at Lutzen, had gone to Dresden, were obliged to leave it on Napoleon's approach. On the 8th he took possession of that town, where he was soon joined by his ally the King of Saxony. After a short stay at Dresden the French crossed the Elbe and pursued the allies, coming up with their rear-guard and beating it at Bischofswerda.

On the 22nd the French came up with the Russian rear-guard in front of the defile of Reichenbach. Napoleon's small force of cavalry was commanded by General Latour-Maubourg, who led it with such energy that the enemy were driven in and abandoned the field after heavy loss. That of the French, though not very numerous, was of a kind to be much felt. General Bruyères, an excellent cavalry officer, had both his legs shot off, and died of the wound. But the most disastrous event of that day was caused by a ball which, after killing General Kirgener, Marshal Lannes' brother-in-law, mortally wounded Duroc, the grand marshal of the palace—a man beloved by everybody, and Napoleon's oldest and best friend. He survived his wound a few hours, and the Emperor went to him and evinced the deepest feeling. His despair was most touching; the witnesses of that heart-breaking scene observed that, when obliged to leave his friend to resume the command of the army, Napoleon, on parting from him, bathed in tears, appointed a meeting in a "better world."

Meanwhile the French army, following up its success, had reached Silesia, and occupied Breslau, the capital, on June 1. Then the allies, the Prussians most of all, struck with alarm at their critical position, and recognizing that, for all their big words, they were unable by themselves to stop the French, wished to gain time, in the hope that Austria might make an end of her hesitation and join forces with them. They sent, therefore, to

sue for an armistice, which might, it was said, through the mediation of Austria, lead to a definite treaty of peace. Napoleon thought it right to grant this armistice, and it was signed on June 4, to last till August 10.

Towards the end of June, the task of organizing the new levies was completed, and the colonels were ordered to return to their duty with the army. I had therefore to part from my family, with whom I had been spending happy days; but honour and duty had to be obeyed, and I took the road back to Germany. I went, in the first place, to Dresden, whither the Emperor had summoned all the colonels to question them as to the composition of the new detachments. In regard to this I learned a thing which nearly broke my heart. I had organized four splendid squadrons of 150 men apiece. The two first, and luckily the finest, had joined the regiment; but the third had by the Emperor's orders been taken off to Hamburg, and drafted into the 26th Chasseurs, one of the weakest regiments in the army. This was quite regular, and I submitted without a murmur. But it was otherwise when I was informed that the fourth squadron, having come under the notice of Jerome, King of Westphalia, at Cassel, had taken his fancy so much, that he had on his own authority embodied it in his guard. I knew that the Emperor, angry at the liberty taken by his brother in thus carrying off his soldiers, had ordered them to resume their journey at once, and I hoped to get them back; but Jerome got at some of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, and they represented that as the King of Westphalia's guard was composed of untrustworthy Germans, it would be well to let him have a French squadron on whom he could count; that, further, the King had just given them handsome uniforms at his own cost; and, lastly, that even without this squadron the 23rd Chasseurs would be one of the strongest regiments in the French cavalry. Anyhow, my squadron was incorporated in the Westphalian body-guard, object as I might.

I rejoined my regiment not far from the Oder. It was cantoned with the rest of Exelmans' division near the little town of Freistadt. M. Wathiez, my new brigadier, had been my captain in the 25th Chasseurs, and was always very kind to me. We were quartered in a comfortable château, named Herzogwaldau, in the centre of the village which my troopers occupied. While we were staying there a curious incident took place. A man named Tautz, the only bad character in my regiment, got very drunk, and threatened an officer, who put him under arrest. He was tried and

condemned to death; and the sentence was approved. When the guard, under the regimental staff-sergeant, Boivin, went to fetch Tautz out to be shot, they found him in his cell perfectly naked, pleading the extreme heat. The staff-sergeant, a brave soldier, but of intellect not equal to his courage, instead of making the culprit dress, merely made him put on a cloak. When they reached the drawbridge across the broad moat of the citadel, Tautz flung the cloak in the faces of his guard, jumped into the water, swam across, and, reaching the shore, went off to join the enemy on the other side of the Oder. He was never heard of again. I reduced the staff-sergeant for his lack of vigilance; but he soon regained his epaulettes by an act of courage which I shall presently have to recount.

The new squadrons brought up the strength of the regiment to 993, nearly 700 of whom had been in the Russian campaign. The newly joined men were strongly built, and nearly all had served in the legion of the department of Jemmapes, which had made their training easy. I blended them with the old squadrons. Both sides were preparing for the struggle: but the enemy had used their time to raise up a powerful adversary for us, when they persuaded Austria to march.

The Emperor's *fête* fell on August 15, but as the armistice ended on the 10th, he ordered it to be kept earlier, and the festivities of "St. Napoleon's Day" were held in the cantonments. This was the last time that the French army celebrated its Emperor's birthday. There was little enthusiasm; for even the least foreseeing of the officers realized that we were on the eve of great changes, and their forebodings were reflected in the minds of the subalterns. Yet each was ready to do his duty, though with small hope of success, for we were vastly inferior to the enemy in numbers. Our allies of the Confederation of the Rhine were wavering, and the Saxon General, Thielmann, with his brigade had already gone over to the Prussians. So there was much uneasiness and little confidence among our troops.

Meanwhile a vast circle was forming round the French army. A Russian corps was in Mecklenburg; Bernadotte, with a force of Swedes, Russians, and Prussians, occupied Berlin; the two main armies of Russia and Prussia were in Silesia; 40,000 Austrians at Linz, and their main force at Prague. Behind this front line, numbering altogether 560,000, were immense reserves.

Murat, who had gone to Naples after the Russian campaign, rejoined the Emperor at Dresden. The Coalition—that is to

say, the Austrians, Russians, and Prussians—opened the campaign by a piece of bad faith unworthy of civilized nations. Although, according to the latest convention, hostilities were not to recommence before August 16, they attacked our outposts on the 14th, and set the greater part of their troops in movement in consequence of Jomini's treachery. Up to that day only two Saxon generals, Thielmann and Longueureau, had debased themselves by going over to the enemy; the uniform of a French general had so far been clear of such a stain. This was inflicted upon it by a Swiss, General Jomini.

Jomini's treason was a most disastrous blow to Napoleon, since many of his army corps were attacked while concentrating and obliged to surrender important positions for want of time to arrange for the defence of them. Meantime, the Emperor, finding the enemy forewarned and on their guard to prevent his intended march on Bohemia, resolved to attack the Prussians in Silesia, and to make the French forces who had been compelled to retire before Blucher resume the offensive in that quarter. On August 20 he reached Lowenberg and attacked a considerable force of the Coalition; and after various actions lasting over three days the enemy retired, with a loss of 7,000 men, behind the Katzbach.

Our new general, M. Wathiez, gained the esteem and affection of the troops in these fights. General Exelmans, commanding the division, was only known to us by public report, which affirmed him to be a man of brilliant valour, but often lacking in the judgment which a commander should have. We had a proof of this in the following incident. Just as the division was executing a retreat, which my regiment had to cover, General Exelmans, under the plea of setting a trap for the Prussian advance-guard, ordered me to place at his disposal my picked troops, and my twenty-five best sharpshooters. He put Major Lacour in command of them, and then posted these 150 men in the middle of a plain surrounded by woods, and, after forbidding them to stir without his orders, went off and forgot all about them. The enemy came up, and, seeing the solitary detachment, halted, suspecting an ambush. To make sure, they sent a few men one by one into the woods to right and left, and, hearing no shots, increased the number till our troops were completely surrounded. Some of the officers observed to Lacour that his retreat was being cut off. Lacour, a brave soldier, but not original, stuck to the letter of his orders. It did not occur to him that General Exelmans might

have forgotten him, and that it would be as well to send and let him know, or at least reconnoitre the ground by which he might retreat. He had been told to stay there, and stay he would, whether his men were killed or taken.

While Major Lacour was carrying out his orders in the style rather of a sergeant than of a field-officer, the division was retiring. General Wathiez and I, not seeing the detachment return, and not knowing where to find Exelmans, who was galloping across country, began to feel very uneasy. I obtained permission from the general to go back for Major Lacour, and, starting with a squadron at full gallop, I got up in time to witness a terrible sight for a colonel who loved his men. After overlapping both flanks and even the rear of our detachment, the enemy attacked it in front with infinitely superior forces, so that 700 or 800 Prussian lancers surrounded our 150 men, who, to complete their misfortunes, had no way of retreat save a wooden footbridge over a deep mill-stream. Our troopers could only march in single file, so that there was a block, and my picked company lost several men. Some of them then perceived a large courtyard, and, thinking that it opened upon the stream, and that they would find a bridge there, entered it, followed by the whole detachment. The stream did indeed run along the yard, but at that point it formed the mill-dam, the banks of which were sustained by large slippery slabs, rendering the approach exceedingly difficult for horses, and giving a great advantage to the enemy, who had closed the gates of the courtyard in order to make sure of capturing the French. At this critical moment I appeared on the other side of the stream with my squadron. I made the men dismount, four of them leaving their horses in the charge of one; the remainder, armed with their carbines, hastened towards the footbridge. This was guarded by a squadron of Prussians, but having remained on horseback, and with no fire-arms but pistols, they could not resist the fire from our carbines, and were forced to retire some hundred paces, leaving about forty killed and wounded on the ground. Those of my troopers who were shut up in the courtyard thought to take advantage of this respite to force the great gate; but I called out to them to do nothing of the kind. It would have done them no good, for in order to join me they would have been obliged to cross the foot-bridge on horseback, which they could only have done in single file, offering their flank and rear to the Prussians, who would promptly have charged and exterminated them. The



bank was planted with riverside trees, among which infantry could defy a large number of cavalry in perfect safety. I therefore placed my dismounted men as skirmishers along the stream, and as soon as they were in touch with the courtyard of the mill, I ordered those who were within it to dismount also and take their carbines; then, while a hundred of them kept the enemy off with their fire, the remainder could pass the horses along over the bridge.

While this movement was being executed in perfect order, the Prussian lancers, furious at seeing their prey on the point of escaping, tried by a vigorous attack to throw our retreat into disorder. But their horses were hampered by the willow branches, by pools of water, and numerous holes, and, being scarcely able to walk over the muddy ground, never succeeded in reaching our skirmishers, whose fire, well aimed at a short distance, caused them considerable loss. However, the Prussian officer who commanded the charge pushed boldly on to the middle of our line and shot one of my best officers, Lieutenant Bachelet, through the head. I regretted him keenly, but he was promptly avenged by his men, for several bullets laid the Prussian officer dead beside him.

The fall of their leader, their heavy loss, and their inability to touch us determined the enemy to retire. I took up my wounded and retreated unpursued. In this deplorable affair my regiment lost an officer and nine troopers killed and thirteen prisoners, among the latter Lieutenant Maréchal. The loss of these twenty-three men grieved me the more in that it was needless and fell entirely on the bravest men of the regiment, most of whom were marked for decoration or promotion. I was never able to console myself for this check, and it put the finishing stroke to our dislike of Exelmans. He got off with a reprimand from General Sébastiani and the Emperor, to whom he had been recommended by his friendship with Murat. Old General Saint-Germain, a former colonel of the 23rd Chasseurs, and indeed the man who had made the regiment for which he had preserved a great regard, said openly that Exelmans deserved an exemplary punishment. A quarrel ensued, and they would have come to blows had not the Emperor personally intervened. Major Lacour, whose bad management had so largely contributed to the disaster, lost my confidence from that day forth.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

*IT HAS* been truly said that in the later campaigns of the Empire the fighting was seldom well managed when Napoleon did not direct it in person. It is to be regretted that the great captain did not realize this, and put so much trust in his lieutenants, many of whom—though, as we had plenty of evidence, they had no lack of self-confidence—were not up to their work. Instead of ordering the commanders of the detached corps to keep as much as possible on the defensive until he could come up with strong reserves to crush the opposing forces, the Emperor allowed them too much latitude; and, as each of them wanted to have his own Austerlitz, they often attacked when it was unwise, and got beaten through their own fault. This was what happened to Marshal Oudinot, to whom Napoleon had given a large army composed of Bertrand's and Reynier's corps, with orders to watch the combined Prussian and Swedish troops, who were near Berlin under the command of Bernadotte. Marshal Oudinot, being weaker than his opponent, should have tried to gain time, but the habit of going straight ahead, the sight of the towers of Berlin, and the fears of not justifying Napoleon's confidence, urged him on. He sent Bertrand's corps straight forward and was beaten, which did not stop Oudinot from persisting in his aim of capturing Berlin, but he lost a great battle at Gross-Beeren, and was compelled to retire with heavy loss towards Wittenberg.

A few days later, Marshal Macdonald, whom Napoleon had left on the Katzbach at the head of several corps, thought that he would take advantage of the freedom which the Emperor's absence gave him to try to win a battle, and wipe out the memory of his defeat on the Trebbia in the Italian campaign of 1799; but he got beaten again. Personally brave though he was, he was always unlucky in war; not that he lacked ability, but because he was, like an Austrian general, too limited and too exclusive in his strategy. Before a battle he could chalk out a plan which was nearly always good, but he should have modified it according to circumstances, and this he was too slow-witted to do. On August 26th, the very day when the Emperor was winning a brilliant victory before Dresden, Macdonald lost a battle which the French call the Katzbach, and the Germans Jauer or Janowitz.

The French army, consisting of 75,000 men, including my regiment, was posted between Leignitz and Goldberg on the left

bank of the little stream of the Katzbach, separated by it from several Prussian corps commanded by Field-Marshal Blücher. The ground which we occupied was cut up with wooded hillocks which, though practical for cavalry, rendered its movements difficult, and for that reason offered great advantages to infantry. Now as Macdonald's force consisted chiefly of the latter, and he had only the 6,000 force of Sébastiani's corps, while the enemy had 15,000 to 20,000 at his disposal posted on the vast level plateau of Jauer, it was obviously his duty to await the Prussians in his position. The only bridges over the Katzbach are in front of the villages, which are few, and the fords are very narrow and become impracticable if the water rises in the least. The stream covered the front of the French army, than which nothing could have been more favourable to us, but Marshal Macdonald, wishing to attack the Prussians, abandoned the great advantage of his position and put the Katzbach behind him, ordering his troops to cross at several points. The cavalry corps, including Exelmans' division, of which my regiment formed part, had to cross the river at the ford of Chemochowitz. The weather had been threatening in the morning, and this should have led the marshal to put off his attack till another day, or at least induced him to act promptly. Instead of this he lost precious moments in giving detailed orders, so that his columns were not in motion till two in the afternoon. Scarcely had the army started when a fearful storm came on, swelling the Katzbach and rendering the ford so difficult that General Saint-Germain's cuirassiers could not cross.

On reaching the opposite bank we had to climb a steep hill through a narrow defile, where the rain had made the ground so slippery that our horses were falling at every step. We were therefore obliged to get down, only remounting when we reached the plateau. There we found several divisions of infantry which the generals had prudently posted near the clumps of wood with which the plain is covered, for, as I have already said, we knew that the enemy was far superior to us in cavalry; and this was all the greater disadvantage to us, because, as has been explained, the rain prevented the soldiers from firing. We were much surprised to see no sign of the enemy. The complete silence made me suspect some trap, since we knew for certain that on the previous night Blücher had occupied the position with more than 100,000 men. We ought, therefore, in my opinion, to have reconnoitred the country well before committing ourselves to

it. General Sébastiani thought otherwise. As soon as Roussel d'Uibal's division was formed he sent it forward into the plain, not only with its own artillery, but with that of Exelmans' division which we had had so much trouble in getting on to the plateau. As soon as Exelmans perceived that Sébastiani had carried off his guns he hastened after that general to reclaim them, leaving his division without any orders. The two brigades composing it were about five hundred paces apart on the same front and drawn up in columns of regiments. Mine formed the head of Wathiez' brigade, having the 24th behind it and the 11th Hussars in the rear.

I was in front of my regiment—which, as I said, was leading the columns—when suddenly I heard loud shouts behind me. A large body of Prussian lancers had issued unexpectedly from the wood, and hurled themselves on the 24th Chasseurs and the lancers, taking them in flank, and throwing them into great disorder. Being directed obliquely, their charge reached the rear of our column first, then the centre, and now was threatening the head. My regiment was therefore about to be attacked on the right flank. The enemy was advancing quickly, and the position was critical; but fully confident of the courage and intelligence of all my men, I gave the order to charge to the right at full gallop. The manoeuvre was a risky one in presence of the enemy, but it was executed so quickly and in such good order that in an instant the regiment was fronting towards the Prussians. These from their oblique movement now presented their flank to us, and our squadron took advantage of this to penetrate the enemy's ranks, doing great execution.

On seeing the success of my regiment, the 24th, recovering from its surprise, rallied and repulsed the part of the enemy's line opposed to it. As for the 11th, however—the Dutchmen whom the Emperor had thought to make Frenchmen by a stroke of the pen—their colonel could not bring them to charge. However, we could do without them, for the 23rd and 24th were enough to rout three Prussian regiments.

While our chasseurs were in hot pursuit, an old colonel on the other side, who had been unhorsed, came near to me for safety, since, even in the heat of the fight, no one dared to strike him while he was under my protection. On foot, and over a soil washed to mud, he followed the rapid movements of my horse for a quarter of an hour, with one hand on my knee, saying: "You are my guardian angel." I was really sorry for the old

man, for he was dropping from fatigue and yet would not leave me, till presently, seeing one of my men leading a captured horse, I made him lend it to the Prussian colonel, whom I sent to the rear with a sergeant.

Meanwhile, the plateau of Jauer and the banks of the Katzbach had suddenly become the scene of a bloody battle, for Prussian troops were emerging from every coppice and the plain was soon covered with them. I could not check my regiment, and we presently found ourselves in front of a brigade of the enemy's infantry, who, owing to the effects of the rain on their muskets, were unable to fire a shot at us. I tried to break the square but our horses could only advance at a walk, and everyone knows that without a dash it is impossible for cavalry to break a well-commanded and well-closed-up battalion which boldly presents a hedge of bayonets. In vain did we approach so close to the enemy that we could talk to them and strike their muskets with our sword-blades; we could not break their lines, as we could easily have done if General Sébastiani had not sent the artillery to another point. The position on both sides was truly ridiculous; we looked each other in the eyes, unable to do any damage, our swords being too short to reach the enemy, and their muskets refusing to go off. Things went on like this for some time till General Maurin sent the 6th Lancers to our aid. Their long weapons, outreaching the enemy's bayonets, soon slew many of the Prussians, enabling the chasseurs to penetrate into the square, where they did terrible execution. In this fight the sonorous voice of Colonel Perquet could be heard shouting in a rich Alsatian accent, "*Bointez lanciers, bointez.*"

In this part of the field, then, the fight was going in our favour; but things were altered by the arrival of 20,000 Prussian cavalry, who, having crushed Roussel d'Urbal's division, sent unsupported more than a league ahead, attacked us with overpowering forces. Their approach was notified to us by the return of General Exelmans, who, as I said, had left his division and gone off almost alone to get back from Sébastiani his guns, which that general had unwisely attached to Roussel d'Urbal's division. He had not found Sébastiani, but had reached the first division in time to see his guns captured, together with D'Urbal's own, and to find himself caught in the rout of his colleague's squadrons. We felt a presentiment of disaster on seeing our general hurry up with changed countenance, and having lost his hat, and even his belt. In haste we halted our soldiers, who were engaged in sabring

the enemy's infantry : but before we could re-form them we were enveloped by the Prussian squadron, who pursued the remains of D'Urbal's division right into our ranks.

In an instant the 5,000 or 6,000 combatants of Sébastiani's corps were overwhelmed by 20,000 troopers, nearly all uhlans, and therefore armed with a lance, a weapon which only a few squadrons of ours carried. The groups which we formed were thus, in spite of all our efforts, constantly broken up, and the enemy pushed us steadily back to the end of the plain, where the steep descent to the Katzbach begins.

At this point we were received by two divisions of French infantry, in rear of which we hoped to rally ; but our men's muskets were also too wet to be fired. Their only means of defence was a battery of six pieces, with which and their bayonets they checked the enemy for a moment ; but the Prussian generals brought up twenty pieces, the French guns were dismounted in an instant, and their battalions broken. Then, with one general *hurrah*, the enemy's troopers hurled us down in disorder to the Katzbach. The stream, which we had crossed in the morning with difficulty, had been transformed by the deluge of rain which had fallen all day long into a raging torrent. The water had overflowed, covering almost entirely the parapet of the Chemo-chowitz bridge, and preventing us from ascertaining if the ford were still passable. People made, however, for the points where they had crossed in the morning ; the ford was impracticable for men on foot, and many were drowned, but the greater number escaped by the bridge.

I got my regiment as much as possible together, making them march in close column of half-sections, so as to give mutual support. They entered the water, and reached the other side with the loss of two men only. All the other cavalry regiments took the same line, comprehending, even in the confusion of the retreat, that the bridges must be left for the infantry. I must admit that the descent of the hill was one of the most critical moments of my life. The steep ground slipped under our horses' feet, and at every step they stumbled over fragments of rock. The enemy's artillery, belching grape upon us, completed the horror of our situation. Still I got off with no accident, thanks to the pluck and cleverness of my Turkish horse. He went along the precipice like a cat on a roof, and saved my life, not for the only time.

After crossing the Katzbach our troops expected to be safe

from the enemy ; but the Prussians had sent a strong column across the river by a bridge above that of Chemochowitz, so that when we reached the bank which we had left in the morning we were astonished to find ourselves attacked by numerous squadrons of uhlans. Yet several regiments—mine was mentioned by Marshal Macdonald in his dispatch—went at the enemy without hesitation. I do not know, however, what would have happened if General Saint-Germain's division, which had been left behind in the morning and consequently was quite fresh, had not been on the spot to come to our succour.

This counter-attack was of great service to us, for it checked the enemy, who, on that day, did not venture to pursue us beyond the Katzbach. But the disaster to the French army was immense, for, having crossed the stream by all the fords and bridges between Liegnitz and Goldberg—that is to say, over a distance of more than five leagues—now that those passages were all rendered useless by the floods the French army found itself extended on a long front, with the Prussians in its rear and an almost impassable stream in its front. Everywhere was our retreat rendered very dangerous by the difficulty of crossing the swollen Katzbach. Most of those who tried to swim the river were drowned, General Sibuet among the number, and we saved only a few guns.

At the battle of the Katzbach, Napoleon's army lost 13,000 men killed or drowned, 20,000 prisoners, and 50 guns. Marshal Macdonald, whose miscalculation from a strategic point of view had brought about this irreparable disaster, though he had lost the confidence of the army, was able to preserve its esteem by the honest and straightforward way in which he admitted his mistake. On the following day he called a meeting of all the generals and colonels, and after inviting us all to help to maintain order, said that every man and officer had done his duty, that the loss of the battle was due to one man only, and that was himself, because when it came on to rain he ought not to have left broken ground to go and attack in an open plain an enemy outnumbering him immensely in cavalry, nor should he have placed a river behind him in stormy weather. This noble confession disarmed criticism, and each man did his utmost to contribute to the safety of the army during its retreat to the Elbe.

Fate seemed determined to overwhelm us, for a few days after Oudinot had lost the battle of Gross-Beeren, Macdonald that of Katzbach, and Vandamme that of Kulm, the French experienced a serious reverse. Marshal Ney, who had succeeded Oudinot

in command of the army which was to march on Berlin, was beaten at Jutterbach by the deserter Bernadotte, and compelled to abandon the right bank of the Elbe. The Emperor returned to Dresden, and the various corps under Macdonald took up a position not far from the town, while Marshal Ney, after driving back the Swedes to the right bank, assembled his troops on the left, at Dessau and Wittenberg. The French army remained almost motionless for about a fortnight in September and the beginning of October. My regiment bivouacked near Weissig on the heights of Pilnitz, these being occupied by one of our divisions of infantry. There was no official armistice, but both sides were tired and hostilities were *de facto* suspended, each side benefiting by this to prepare for new and more terrible combats.

At Pilnitz I received a letter from the colonel of Prussian cavalry to whom I had lent a horse when taken prisoner by my troopers at the beginning of the battle of Katzbach. He had been set free by his own side when the tide of fortune turned, but was none the less grateful for what I had done for him. In order to prove it he sent me ten troopers and a lieutenant of my regiment, who had been wounded and taken prisoners. Herr von Blankensee, for that was his name, had had their wounds dressed, and, after taking every care of them for a fortnight, had obtained leave to have them escorted to the French outposts, and forwarded them to me with many thanks, assuring me that he owed me his life.

While we were encamped at Pilnitz, a curious thing took place in the sight of the whole division. A corporal of the 4th Chasseurs had in a drunken moment insulted his lieutenant, and a lancer of the 6th, being savagely bitten by his horse and unable to make it let go, had struck it in the belly with a pair of shears, thereby killing it. Both men certainly deserved punishment, but only as a disciplinary measure. General Exelmans by his own authority condemned them to death, and having made the division mount to be present at the execution, he drew them up on three sides of a large hollow square, two pits being dug on the fourth side, and the criminals placed in front of them. I had been riding about all night, and returned to camp at that moment. On seeing the melancholy preparations I had made sure that the offenders had been duly tried. I soon found out that it was not so; and on going up to a group formed by General Exelmans, the two brigadiers, and all the colonels, I heard M. Devance, of the 4th Chasseurs, and M. Perquit, of the 6th Lancers, entreating



the general to pardon the two offenders. Exelmans refused; walking up and down in front of the groups while they were begging for clemency. I have never been able to refrain from expressing my indignation at the sight of an act which seemed to me unjust. I may have been wrong, but addressing Colonels Devance and Perquit, I told them that they were lowering their dignity by permitting men of their regiments to be marched through the camp as criminals without having been tried. I added, "The Emperor has granted power of life and death to no one, and has reserved that of pardoning to himself." On seeing the effect produced by my outbreak, General Exelmans was moved, and called out that he forgave the *chasseur*, but that the lancer would be shot. That is to say, he pardoned the soldier who had insulted his lieutenant, and meant to execute the man who had killed a horse.

To put the poor fellow to death, two sergeants were called for from each regiment; but as sergeants have no carbines, they had to take those belonging to some of the men. When the order reached me I made no answer to my adjutant, so no man of the 23rd presented himself to take part in the execution. General Exelmans perceived it and said nothing. A report rang out, and all the spectators groaned with indignation. Exelmans ordered that, according to custom, the troops should file past the corpse; the march began. My regiment was second in the column, and I was just debating whether I ought to make it pass the body of the unhappy victim of Exelmans' severity when shouts of laughter were heard proceeding from the 24th Chasseurs, who had already reached the place of execution. I sent a staff-sergeant to find out the cause of this indecent mirth in presence of a corpse, and I soon learned that the dead man was doing very well. In fact all that had taken place was merely a farce invented to frighten any soldiers who might be tempted to fail in their discipline—a farce which consisted in shooting a man with blank cartridges. In order that the secret of this sham execution should be better kept, our chief had entrusted the duty to sergeants and had had cartridges containing only powder served out to them; but as in order to complete the illusion it was necessary that the troops should see the corpse, Exelmans had told the lancer to fall face forwards as soon as they fired, to sham dead, and to leave the army the next night in peasant's clothes, and with a little money given to him on purpose. But the soldier, a crafty Gascon, knew quite well that Exelmans was exceeding

his powers, and had no more right to shoot him without trial than to send him away without leave. So he remained standing after the discharge, and refused to go away unless he was given a passport, and guaranteed against arrest by the gendarmes. On learning that it was this discussion between the general and the supposed dead man which had excited the merriment of the 24th, I did not choose that my regiment should take part in this comedy, which in my view was far more contrary to discipline than were the faults it was intended to check. So I made my squadrons wheel, and trotting off, I brought them away from this unpleasant scene back to their camp, where I made them dismount. All the generals and colonels having followed this example, Exelmans remained alone with the dead man, who calmly took his way back to his bivouac, where he at once set to work to eat his soup with his comrades amid renewed peals of laughter.

Meanwhile, both sides were preparing to resume the hostilities which, as I have said, had been unofficially suspended. One morning, when our camp was perfectly quiet, just as I was in my shirt-sleeves, preparing to shave myself before a little mirror hung to a tree, I felt a tap on the shoulder. Looking round sharply to see who in my regiment had taken this liberty with his colonel, I beheld the Emperor. He had wished to examine the neighbouring position without alarming the enemy, and had gone the rounds with a single aide-de-camp, followed by some squadrons selected from all the regiments in the division. By his order, I took command of this escort, and went about all day with him; nor had I any fault to find with him in the matter of kindness to me.

On September 28 the Emperor reviewed our corps, and gave me proofs of exceptional favour; for, contrary to his usual practice of giving only one reward at a time, he made me officer of the Legion of Honour and Baron, and granted me a gratuity. Further he heaped honours on my regiment, saying that it was the only one in Sébastiani's corps which had maintained good order at the Katzbach, had captured guns, and beaten the Prussians wherever it met them. The regiment owed this distinction to Marshal Macdonald's eulogy of it; at the time of the rout at the Katzbach he had taken refuge in its ranks, and shared in the firm charge by which it had driven the enemy back across the river.

Meanwhile, the French army was concentrating in the neighbourhood of Leipzig. The enemy was also marching on that town in a vast circle which contracted day by day; with the

evident object of shutting up the French troops, and wholly cutting off their retreat.

On October 14, a brisk cavalry engagement took place between our advance-guard and that of the Russians and Austrians, without decisive result ; ending in that most absurd of warlike operations, a cannonade going on till nightfall, with no effect beyond the destruction of a good many men. Early next morning the Emperor reached Leipzig, leaving 20,000 men at Dresden under Saint-Cyr.

The exact facts about the battle of Leipzig will never be known. The fighting, which lasted several days, took place on a vast and complicated field, and the immense number of troops which took part in it belonged to different nations. It is on the French side that documents are chiefly lacking ; so many commanders of army corps and divisions, as well as staff officers, fell in the battle or were taken prisoners that their reports were never completed, and those which came to hand showed the hurry and disorder amid which they had been drawn up. In my own case, being colonel of a regiment, and compelled to follow all the movements of my division, I could not know what others were doing, as in the days when I was an aide-de-camp, and by carrying orders to different parts of the field was enabled to know something of the general plan of operations. I must therefore more than ever abridge my story, and confine myself to what is absolutely necessary in order to give a notion of the most important events which so powerfully influenced the destinies of Napoleon, France, and all Europe.

The ring of steel in which the enemy was preparing to enclose the French army was not yet completed round Leipzig, when the King of Wurtemberg thought it his duty to warn Napoleon that all Germany was, at the instigation of the English, about to rise against him ; and that, as the troops of the Confederation would shortly desert him, he would not have more than time to retire behind the Main. He added that he himself would be unable to avoid following their example, for he must at length yield to the pressure of his subjects and follow the torrent of public feeling in Germany.

Strongly affected by the advice of the ablest and most loyal of his allies, the Emperor had, it is said, the idea of retreating towards the hilly district of Thuringen and Hesse, and, covered by the Saale, allowing the Coalition to attack him in a difficult country. Had this plan been carried out, it might have saved

Napoleon ; but for that prompt action was needed before the enemy's armies were wholly joined and near enough to attack us on the retreat. The Emperor, however, could not make up his mind to abandon any part of his conquests, nor yet to let it be believed that he considered himself beaten. The great captain's excess of courage was our ruin ; he overlooked the fact that his army, weakened by its heavy losses, numbered among its ranks many strangers who were only waiting the opportunity to betray him, and that in the broad plains of Leipzig, he ran every chance of being overwhelmed by numbers. Napoleon's confidence in himself and in his troops prevailed, and he decided to accept battle in the plains of Leipzig.

Hardly had this fatal decision been taken when a second letter came from the King of Wurtemberg, with the news that the King of Bavaria had come to terms with the Coalition, and that the united Austrian and Bavarian armies, under General von Wrede, were marching on the Rhine. With much regret Wurtemberg had been compelled by the strength of this army to unite here with it ; and the Emperor might therefore expect that before long 100,000 men would be investing Mainz and threatening the French frontier.

This unforeseen news led Napoleon to think that he had better return to his plan of retiring behind the Saale ; but it was too late. The main force of the allies was by this time in presence of the French army, and too near for retreat to be possible without being attacked during the operation. He therefore determined to fight, though his whole force, French and allied, amounted only to 157,000 men, including 29,000 cavalry, while Schwarzenberg could dispose of 350,000 Russians, Austrians, Prussians and Swedes, his cavalry being 54,000.

The battle of Leipzig began on October 16, 1813, and lasted three days. Without going into the details of this memorable action, I think I ought to specify the principal positions occupied by the French army, which will also give a general idea of those of the enemy. Muiat commanded our right wing, the extremity of which rested on the Pleisse, near the villages of Connewitz, Dolitz, and Mark-Kleeberg, which were occupied by Prince Poniatowsky and his Poles. Next to these, behind the village of Wachau, was Marshal Victor ; Augereau's troops occupied Dosen. These corps of infantry were supported by cavalry under Kellermann and Michaud. The centre, under the immediate command of the Emperor, was at Liebertvulkwitz. It consisted

of Lauriston's and Macdonald's corps of infantry with the cavalry of Latour-Maubourg and Sébastiani ; my regiment, forming part of the latter general's corps, was posted facing the Kolmberg. The left wing, under Marshal Ney, was formed of Marmont's, Reynier's, and Souham's corps, supported by the Duke of Padua's cavalry. It occupied Taucha, Plaussig, and the banks of the Partha. A corps of observation, 15,000 strong, under General Bertrand, was sent to the further side of Leipzig to hold Lindeau and the road to Lutzen. At Probstheida, in rear of the centre, was the reserve, under Oudinot, consisting of the Old and Young Guard, and Nansouty's cavalry. The King of Saxony remained in the town of Leipzig with his own guard and a few French regiments.

During the night of the 15th, Marshal Macdonald had made a movement to concentrate on Liebertvolkwitz, but as it was not wished to let the Kolmberg fall into the enemy's hands before morning I was ordered to watch it till daybreak. It was a ticklish duty, since it involved advancing with my regiment to the foot of the hill while the army retired half a league in the opposite direction. I ran the risk of being surrounded and carried off with my whole regiment by the enemy's advance-guard. Their scouts could not fail to ascend the hill as soon as the first light of dawn should permit them to see what was going on in the plain. It was splendid weather, and one could see very well by the starlight ; but as in such a case one can much more easily perceive from below men coming on to high ground than those above can see those below, I brought my squadrons as near as possible to the hill, and, after ordering perfect silence and stillness, awaited events. Chance very nearly produced one which would have been very fortunate for France and for the Emperor, and would have made me for ever famous. It happened thus :

Half an hour before the first light of dawn, three horsemen, coming from the enemy's side, slowly ascended the Kolmberg. They could not see us, while we plainly made out their outlines and heard their conversation. They were talking French ; one was a Russian, the other two Prussians. The first, who appeared to be in authority, told one of the others to let *their majesties* know that there were no French at that point, and that they could come up, for in a few minutes all the plain would be visible, but that they must make the most of the time lest the French should send skirmishers in that direction. The officer to whom these words were addressed remarked that the escorts were still

some way off. "What matter?" was the answer, "since there is no one but us here." At this my troops and I redoubled our attention, and soon perceived on the top of the hill a score of officers, one of whom dismounted.

Although I certainly had had no expectation of capturing a great prize, I had warned my officers that if we saw any of the enemy on the Swedish redoubt, two squadrons should, at a signal which I would give with my handkerchief, work round the hill to the right and left, so as to cut off anyone who should have ventured so near to our army. I was, therefore, very hopeful, but just then the over-eagerness of one of my troopers wrecked my plan. The man, having accidentally let his sword drop, instantly took his carbine, and, fearing to be left behind when I gave the signal for attack, fired into the group and killed a Prussian major. As you may suppose, in the twinkling of an eye all the enemy's officers, having no escort but a few orderlies, and seeing themselves on the point of being surrounded by us, galloped away. Our people could not follow them far for fear of themselves falling into the hands of the escort, whom we could hear coming up. My men, however, captured two officers, from whom we could get no information, but afterwards I learnt from my friend, Baron von Stoch, that the Emperor Alexander of Russia and the King of Prussia were among the officers who had so nearly fallen into the hands of the French near the Swedish redoubt. If this had happened the destinies of Europe would have been changed. As, however, luck had decided otherwise, there was nothing left for me but to withdraw quickly towards the French army.

On October 16, at eight in the morning, the allied batteries gave the signal for attack. A brisk cannonade opened along all the line, and the allied army marched on us at all points. The action began on our right, where the Poles were driven back by the Prussians and abandoned the village of Mark-Kleeberg. On our centre, the Russians and Austrians six times attacked Wachau and Liebertvolkwitz, and each time were beaten with heavy loss. The Emperor, doubtless regretting the abandonment of the Swedish redoubt, whence the enemy was pouring a hail of grape upon us, gave orders to recapture the hill, which was promptly effected by the 22nd light infantry supported by my regiment.

After this success, the Emperor, being unable to produce any impression on the enemy's wing owing to the great extent of their front, resolved merely to keep them employed while he

endeavoured to pierce their centre. To this end he sent Mortier with two divisions of infantry, and Oudinot with the Young Guard, towards Wachau, Drouot supporting the attack which to some extent succeeded, with sixty guns.

On his side, Marshal Victor routed the Russian corps under Prince Eugène of Wurtemberg; but the latter rallied his troops at Jossa. At the same moment Lauriston and Macdonald debouched from Liebertvolkwitz, the enemy was put to flight, and the French took possession of the wood of Gross Possna \*. In vain did the Austrian cavalry under Klenau, supported by a "pulk" of Cossacks, endeavour to restore the fight; it was charged and thrown into disorder by Sébastiani's corps, after desperate fighting, in which my regiment took part. I lost some men, and my senior major, M. Pozac, was wounded by a lance in the breast, in consequence of having omitted to adopt the customary protection of his rolled-up cloak.

As neither side had so far gained any marked advantages, Napoleon, by way of a decisive stroke, launched on the enemy's centre his reserve, composed of all the Old Guard and a corps of fresh troops from Leipzig. But at that moment a regiment of the enemy's cavalry, which had made its way by design or accident to the rear of the French, caused some uneasiness among our troops. They halted and formed square to avoid a surprise, and before the cause of the alarm could be discovered night came on, and suspended operations at that point.

On our extreme right, General Merfeldt had during the whole day been vainly trying to get possession of the passage over the Pleisse, which Poniatowski's Poles defended. Towards evening, however, he succeeded in making himself master of the village of Dolitz, thus putting our right wing in danger. But the chasseurs of the Old Guard, under General Curial, came up at the double, hurled the Austrians back over the river, taking several hundred prisoners, General Merfeldt himself falling, for the third time in his life, into the hands of the French. Although the Poles had allowed Dolitz to be taken from them, the Emperor thought it well, in order to inspire them, to give a marshal's baton to their chief, Prince Poniatowski: he did not long enjoy the honour of bearing it.

On the other side of the Elster the Austrian general, Gyulai, had carried the village of Lindenau after seven hours' hard fighting. On hearing of this serious event, which endangered the retreat

\* [Called the "University Wood."]

of the greater part of his troops, the Emperor ordered General Bertrand to attack Lindenau, and the position was recaptured with the bayonet.

On our left Ney's impatience nearly brought about a great disaster. That marshal, who was commanding the left wing posted according to the Emperor's orders, finding that by ten o'clock no troops were to be seen in front of him, of his own accord sent one of his army corps under General Souham to Wachau, where the fighting appeared to be hot. But during this ill-judged movement Marshal Blücher, who had been delayed, came up with the Army of Silesia, and captured the village of Mockern. Thereupon Ney was obliged, owing to the reduction of his force, to retire towards evening within the walls of Leipzig, and to confine himself to defending the suburb of Halle. In this engagement the French lost heavily, and a bad effect was produced on those of our men who in other parts of the field could hear the firing in their rear. Towards eight in the evening all firing ceased on both sides and the night was quiet.

Early on the 18th the army of the Coalition opened the attack. The 2nd cavalry corps, to which my regiment belonged, was posted as before between Liebertvorkwitz and Kolmberg. The fighting was hottest towards our centre, where the village of Probstheida was attacked simultaneously by a Russian and a Prussian force. Both were repulsed with heavy loss. But the combat went on at all points, and the Russians attacked Holzhausen, which Macdonald successfully defended. Towards eleven o'clock firing was heard beyond Leipzig, in the direction of Lindenau; and we heard that our troops had at that point broken the circle in which the enemy flattered himself that he had shut up the French army, and that General Bertrand was making his way in the direction of the Rhine. The Emperor then gave orders that the baggage should be withdrawn towards Lützen.

Meantime the plain was the scene of a fierce engagement about Connwitz and Lössnig; and the earth shook with the thunder of a thousand guns. The enemy tried to force the passage of the Pleisse, but were repulsed, though the Poles spoilt some of our finest cavalry charges. Then the first cavalry corps, seeing the Austrian and Prussian squadrons coming up to the aid of their allies, issued from behind Probstheida, broke the enemy and drove them back on their reserves, which were commanded by the Grand Duke Constantine. The allies at once brought up immense forces and tried to carry Probstheida, but the formidable masses were



so well received by our infantry that they promptly recoiled. At this point we lost Generals Vial and Rochambeau ; the latter had just been created marshal by the Emperor.

Up to this time Bernadotte had not fought against the French, and was said to be wavering. But at length, under the exhortations and even threats of Marshal Blucher, he decided to cross the Partha above the village of Mockau with his Swedes and one Russian corps.\* A brigade of Saxon hussars and lancers was posted at this point, and, on seeing Bernadotte's leading Cossacks approach, made as though to charge them ; but they suddenly wheeled round, and forgetting the risk to which they were exposing their King, who was still in the midst of Napoleon's army, these scoundrelly Saxons turned their muskets and cannons against the French.

The head of Bernadotte's army marched along the left bank of the Partha towards Sellershausen, which Reynier was defending. That general, whose troops were almost entirely drawn from the German contingents, after witnessing the desertion of the Saxon cavalry had lost confidence in the infantry of the same nation and placed Durutte's cavalry near them to keep them in hand. But Ney with over-confidence, bade him deploy the Saxons, and send them in support of a French regiment which was holding the village of Paunsdorf. Hardly, however, had the Saxons got away from the French troops, when, seeing the Prussian standards near Paunsdorf, they made off at full speed in that direction, led by General Russel, their unworthy chief. Some French officers, unable to imagine such treachery, thought that the Saxons were going to attack the Prussians, so that General Gressot, Reynier's chief of staff, actually hurried off to check what he took for over-eagerness ; but he found that he had none but enemies before him. This desertion of an entire army corps not only produced an alarming gap in the French line, but rekindled the ardour of the allied forces, and the Wurtemberg cavalry instantly followed the example of the Saxons. Bernadotte welcomed the traitors into his ranks, called upon their artillery to assist his, and even begged the English commissioner to lend him the battery of Congreve

\* [The Count of Rochecouart gives a most picturesque description of his mission to Bernadotte, who, in the month of September, was still hesitating to pass the Elbe ; and similarly describes his meeting on the battle-field of Leipzig with the Crown Prince of Sweden, "superb in the thickest of the fire, with dead and wounded all round him."]

rockets which he had brought. These the former marshal of France directed upon the French.

No sooner was the Saxon corps in the ranks of the enemy than it notified its treachery by a volley from all its guns—the commander exclaiming that he had burnt half his ammunition for the French, and would now fire the rest at them! Therewith he launched a hail of projectiles at us, of which my regiment received a large share. I lost some thirty men, including Captain Bertin, a most deserving officer, whose head was taken off by a round-shot. And it was Bernadotte, a Frenchman, for whom the blood of Frenchmen had earned a crown, that gave us this finishing stroke!

Among this general disloyalty the King of Wurtemberg formed an honourable exception. As I have said, he warned Napoleon that circumstances would force him to leave his cause; but even after taking this supreme decision, he carried it out with perfect loyalty, ordering his troops to take no action against the French without giving them ten days' notice. Even when he had become our enemy, he expelled from his army the general and several of the officers who had taken their troops over into the Russian ranks during the battle of Leipzig, and deprived the deserting regiments of all their decorations.

Meanwhile Probstheida continued to be the scene of a murderous struggle. The Old Guard was deployed in rear of the village, ready to aid its defenders. Bulow's corps, trying to advance, was crushed, but we lost General Delmas, a distinguished soldier and honourable man, who had fallen out with Napoleon at the creation of the Empire and lived ten years in retirement, but demanded to serve when his country was in danger. The French were maintaining their position all along the line. On the left, where Macdonald and Sébastiani had held their ground between Probstheida and Stotteritz in the teeth of frequent attacks from Klenau's Austrians and Doctoroff's Russians, we were suddenly assailed by a charge of more than 20,000 Cossacks and Bashkirs. Their efforts were chiefly directed against Sébastiani's cavalry, and in a moment the barbarians surrounded our squadrons with loud shouts, letting off thousands of arrows. The loss these caused was slight, for the Bashkirs are totally undrilled and have no more notion of any formation than a flock of sheep. Thus they cannot shoot horizontally in front of them without hitting their own comrades, and are obliged to fire their arrows parabolically into the air, with more or less elevation according to the distance at which they judge the enemy to be. As this method does not

allow of accurate aiming, nine-tenths of the arrows are lost, while the few that hit are pretty well spent, and only fall with the force of their own weight, which is inconsiderable ; so that the wounds they cause are usually trifling. As they have no other weapons, they are certainly the least dangerous troops in the world. However, as they were coming up in myriads, and the more of these wasps one killed the more came on, the vast number of arrows with which they filled the air were bound sooner or later to inflict some severe wounds. Thus one of my non-commissioned officers, named Meslin, was pierced from breast to back by an arrow. Seizing it in both hands he broke it and drew the two portions from his body, but died a few minutes later. I fancy this was the only case of death caused by the Bashkirs' arrows : but I had several men and horses hit, and was myself wounded by the ridiculous weapon. I had my sword in my hand, and was giving orders to an officer. As I raised my arm to indicate the direction in which he was to go, I felt my sword unexpectedly checked, and perceived a slight pain in the right thigh. Looking down I saw that an arrow four feet long was sticking an inch deep in my right thigh, though in the excitement of the fight I had not perceived the wound. I got Dr. Parot to take it out and place it in the regimental ambulance, for I wished to preserve it as a curious relic, but I am sorry to say it has been mislaid. As you may suppose, I did not leave my regiment for so slight a wound ; and, indeed, the moment was very critical. The reinforcements brought up by Bernadotte and Blucher were attacking the suburb of Schonfeld, not far from the point where the Partha enters the town of Leipzig. Generals Lagrange and Friederichs repulsed seven assaults on this important point, driving the allies from the houses which they carried. General Friederichs was killed in the combat ; he was an excellent and brave officer, and had the further advantage of being the handsomest man in the French army. The enemy would, however, have probably captured Schonfeld, had not Marshal Ney flown to the support of that village. He himself received a contusion in the shoulder, which compelled him to leave the field.

When night fell, the two armies were over most part of their lines in the same position as when the battle began. That evening my troopers, and indeed all Sébastiani's crops, tethered their horses to the same pickets which they had used for the three previous days, and most of the battalions occupied the same bivouacs. Thus this battle, so vaunted as a victory by our enemies,

was indecisive. We were inferior in numbers, with nearly all the nations of Europe against us and a crowd of traitors in our ranks, and yet did not lose an inch of ground. The English general, Sir Robert Wilson, who was present at Leipzig as British commissioner and whose evidence cannot be suspected of partiality says : " In spite of the defection of the Saxon army in the middle of the battle, in spite of the ardent and persevering courage of the allied troops, they could not carry a single one of the villages which the French proposed to hold as vital to their position. The action was closed by night, leaving to the French, and especially to the defenders of Probstheida, the glory of having inspired a generous envy in their enemies."

## CHAPTER XXXV

*IN THE* calm of the night which fell on the fields of Leipzig after the terrible battle which they had witnessed, the chiefs on both sides could consider their position. Napoleon's was most unfavourable, and indeed if that great man has been blamed for not having retired behind the Saale a week before the battle, when he might still have avoided endangering the safety of his army, around which infinitely superior forces were about to form a ring of steel, it is with much greater reason that many soldiers have disapproved his dispositions when he allowed himself to be completely surrounded on the battlefield of Leipzig.

We are now approaching a critical moment. The French had maintained their positions during the three days which the battle had lasted, but this success had only been obtained at the cost of much bloodshed, for they had had nearly 40,000 men disabled. The enemy had, it is true, lost 60,000, a difference which must be attributed to their persistency in attacking villages which we had entrenched, but as the number of their troops was infinitely greater than ours, our army was proportionately far more weakened by its losses than theirs. It must be added that as the French artillery had in the three days fired 220,000 rounds our reserves were exhausted, and we had only 16,000 rounds left—enough, that is, for two hours' fighting. This lack of ammunition, which ought to have been foreseen before engaging superior forces at a distance from our frontier, rendered Napoleon incapable of giving battle again, and he was compelled to make up his mind to order a retreat.

It was no easy matter to carry this out. The ground which we occupied, being damp meadows with brooks between them and intersected by three streams, offered a number of small valleys, and these we had to pass close under the eyes of the enemy, who would find it easy to throw our march into disorder. There was only one way to secure our retreat: namely, the provision of a number of plank roads across the meadows, ditches and watercourses, and of larger bridges across the three streams, especially the Elster, into which the others flow at the very gates of Leipzig. Nothing was easier to effect, since any amount of planks, beams, nails, &c., were close at hand in the town and suburbs.

The whole army was under the impression that all this had been done on its first arrival, and the work added to on the 17th when there was no fighting. But by a series of unfortunate circumstances, and by inconceivable neglect, no steps had been taken. Among the documents which are extant about the battle, there is absolutely no official statement to show that any measures had been taken, if a retreat was necessary, to facilitate the outflow of the columns from either the river valleys or the streets of Leipzig.

The Emperor's chief of the head-quarters staff was Prince Berthier, who had been with him since the Italian campaign of 1796. He was a man of capacity, accuracy, and devotion to duty, but he had often felt the effects of the imperial wrath, and had acquired such a dread of Napoleon's outbreaks that he had vowed in no circumstance to take the initiative or ask any question, but to confine himself to executing orders which he received in writing. This system, while keeping the chief of the staff on good terms with his master, was injurious to the interests of the army; for great as were the Emperor's activity and talents, it was physically impossible for him to see to everything, and thus, if he overlooked any important matter, it did not get attended to.

So it seems to have been at Leipzig. Nearly all the marshals and generals commanding army corps pointed out to Berthier, over and over again, the necessity of providing many passages to secure the retreat in the event of a reverse, but he always answered: "The Emperor has given no orders." Nothing could be got out of him, so that when, on the night of the 18th, the Emperor gave the order to retreat on Weissenfels and the Saale, there was not a beam or a plank across a single brook.

Meanwhile, the troops were marching from that field which had witnessed their prowess and been watered by so much of their

blood. The Emperor left his bivouac at 8 p.m., and took up his position in the town at the *Prussian Arms* in the horsemarket. After giving his orders, he visited the King of Saxony, whom he found making arrangements to follow him. The King, a model friend, expected that, to punish him for his fidelity to the Emperor of the French, the allied sovereigns would deprive him of his crown, but he was most afflicted by the thought that his army had disgraced itself. Napoleon could not console the good old man, and only with difficulty persuaded him to stay at Leipzig and send one of his ministers to make terms with the Coalition. The Emperor then took leave of the King, the Queen, and their daughter. The parting was the more touching by the fact of news having come that the allies declined to enter into any engagement as to the course they meant to take with regard to the Saxon monarch. He would, therefore, be at their mercy, and in his rich provinces they had strong motives for severity.

About eight o'clock in the evening the corps of Victor and Augereau, the ambulances, part of the artillery, the cavalry, and the imperial guard began to retreat. While they were passing through Lindenau, Ney, Marmont, and Reynier guarded the suburbs of Halle and Rosenthal. Lauriston, Macdonald, and Poniatowski entered the town and established themselves behind the gates, the walls of which had battlements. Thus all was ready for an obstinate resistance by the rear-guard, and the army was free to retreat in good order. Still, Napoleon, wishing to spare the town the horrors of street fighting, had allowed the magistrates to petition the allied sovereigns for an armistice of a few hours that the evacuation might be conducted with order. This humane proposal was rejected, and the allies, in hope of profiting by any disorder which might arise in the French rear-guard, scrupled not to expose one of the largest towns in Germany to total destruction. Then, in their indignation, several generals proposed to the Emperor to secure the retreat of his army by concentrating it within the town, and setting fire to all the suburbs except that of Lindenau. I think that the refusal to allow us to retreat unmolested justified us in employing all possible means of defence, and that as fire was the most effective we should have made use of it ; but Napoleon could not make up his mind to it. This excessive magnanimity lost him his crown, for the fight which I am going to relate cost us nearly as many men as the three days' battle. Indeed, it was more disastrous, for it demoralized the army, which would otherwise have reached France

in considerable strength ; and the fine way in which our weak remnant opposed the allies for three months shows pretty well what we could have done if the survivors of the great battle had recrossed the Rhine without losing their arms and their organization. France would probably have repelled the invaders.

But it was not to be so ; for while Napoleon, with a too chivalrous generosity—mistaken, as I think—was refusing to burn an enemy's town and thus secure without a blow the safe retreat of his army, Bernadotte, the unworthy Crown Prince of Sweden, blaming the lack of zeal which his allies showed in the destruction of his fellow-countrymen, launched all his troops against the suburb of Taucha, captured it, and entered the town. Following his example, Blucher with his Prussians, the Russians, and the Austrians attacked the rear of the French columns in their retreat towards the Lindenau bridge over the Elster ; and finally, to fill our cup, a smart musketry fire opened near that bridge, the only way of retreat open to our troops. This fire came from the battalions of the Saxon guard, who had been left in the town with their King. Regretting that they had not been able to desert with the rest of their army, and wishing to testify their German patriotism, they attacked the French in rear, before the palace of their sovereign. In vain did the unfortunate prince, appearing on the balcony, where the bullets were flying, exclaim to his officers and men, " Cowards ! kill me, your sovereign, and spare me the sight of your dishonour." The scoundrels continued to assassinate the French, and the King, returning to his apartments, seized the colours of his guard and flung them into the fire.

The last kick was given to our troops by a Baden battalion which, being notorious for cowardice, had been left in the town during the battle to chop wood for the bakehouses. These miscreants, from the shelter of the windows of the great bakery, also fired on our soldiers, killing a great number. The French, meanwhile, made a brave resistance, defending themselves in the houses, and, in spite of their losses, disputing the ground foot by foot with the allied armies, while they retired in good order towards the bridge of Lindenau.

The Emperor had with difficulty got out of the town, and reached the suburb. At the last bridge, called the Mill-bridge, he dismounted, and not till then gave orders to charge the mine under the main bridge. Further, he sent orders to Ney, Macdonald, and Poniatowski to hold the town twenty-four hours longer, so as to allow the artillery and baggage time to get through the

suburb and across the bridges. Then he remounted ; but he had hardly ridden a thousand paces along the road to Lutzen when a fearful explosion was heard. The great bridge over the Elster had blown up. And the troops under Macdonald, Lauriston, Reynier, and Poniatowski with more than 200 guns, were still in Leipzig, and their retreat was wholly cut off. It was a climax to our disasters.

After the destruction of the bridge, some of the French threw themselves into the Elster, in the hope of swimming across. Some succeeded, including Marshal Macdonald ; but the greater number, Prince Poniatowski among them, were drowned, because when they had crossed the river they could not get up the muddy banks, which were lined, moreover, with the enemy's skirmishers. Those of our men who remained in the town, thinking only how to sell their lives dearly, barricaded themselves behind the houses, and fought valiantly all the day and a part of the night ; but their ammunition failed, their hastily-raised entrenchments were forced, and nearly all were slain. The slaughter did not cease till two in the morning.

All this time the allied sovereigns, Bernadotte among them, assembled in the chief square, were relishing their victory, and deliberating how best to make sure of its results. The number of French massacred in the houses is reckoned at 13,000, and 25,000 were made prisoners. The enemy took also 250 guns.

After this general account of the events which followed the battle of Leipzig, I ought to tell you what specially befell my regiment and Sébastiani's corps, to which it belonged. As we had for three days beaten off the enemy and held our part of the field, the troops were much astonished and grieved to hear on the evening of the 18th that for want of ammunition we were going to retreat. We hoped (and it seems to have been the Emperor's design) that he would at least go no further than beyond the Saale ; where we might, in the neighbourhood of the fortress of Erfurt, replenish our powder wagons and recommence hostilities. We mounted then at 8 p.m. on October 18, and quitted the field where we had fought for three days, and where so many of our comrades had fallen with honour. Hardly were we out of our bivouac, when we felt the inconvenience arising from the neglect of the imperial staff to prepare for the retreat of so large an army. Every minute the columns were stopped by broad ditches, by marshes and brooks, which might so easily have been bridged. Horses and wheels stuck in the mud : and as the night was dark



there were blocks everywhere. Our march was, therefore, very slow, and my regiment, being at the head of Exelmans', the leading division, did not reach the Lindenau bridge till 4 a.m. on the 19th. As we crossed it, we were far from foreseeing the frightful catastrophe which it was in a few hours to witness.

Day broke ; the broad road was covered with troops of all arms in great number, which showed that the army would be still strong when it reached the Saale. The Emperor came by ; but as he galloped along the flank of the column he heard none of the acclamations which were wont to proclaim his presence. The army was ill-content with the little care which had been taken to secure its retreat ; but what would the troops have said if they had known with how little foresight the passage of the Elster had been arranged ? They had crossed it ; but many of their comrades were about to find their deaths there. We were halting at Markranstadt, a little town three leagues from Leipzig, when we heard the explosion of the mine ; but instead of being grieved, all rejoiced ; for we doubted not that it had been fired to prevent the passage of the enemy after all our columns were safe across.

During the few hours' rest which we took at Markranstadt I was able to look at our squadrons in detail, and learn the losses of the regiment in the three days' fighting. I was horrified to find that they amounted to 149, of which sixty, including two captains, three lieutenants, and eleven non-commissioned officers were killed ; a terrible proportion out of 700, which had been the strength of the regiment on the morning of the 16th. Nearly all the wounds were caused by grape or round-shot, which unhappily allowed small hope of recovery.

While the Emperor and the divisions from Leipzig were halted at Markranstadt came the disastrous news of the destruction of the Lindenau bridge. The army had lost by this nearly all its artillery ; half the troops were left as prisoners, and thousands of our wounded comrades handed over to the outrage of the hostile soldiery, hounded on by its infamous officers to the slaughter.\* Grief was universal, for each man had a relation or a friend to mourn. The Emperor appeared overwhelmed ; but he ordered Sébastiani's cavalry to return as far as the bridge for the protection of individuals who might succeed in crossing the river at one

\* [It is only fair to the victors to say that eye-witnesses give a very different account of their conduct towards the wounded than these expressions would seem to imply. But probably they only indicate the temper of the French army at the moment.]

point or another. My regiment and the 24th, being the best mounted, were ordered to lead the column and to go at full trot. General Wathiez being unwell, it fell to me, as senior colonel, to command the brigade. Hardly had we traversed half the distance when we heard frequent shots, and as we drew near the suburb we could distinguish the despairing cries of the unhappy French, who, unable to retreat, and without cartridges, were being hunted from street to street, and butchered in a cowardly manner by Prussians, Badeners, and Saxons.

The fury of my two regiments was indescribable. Every man breathed vengeance, and regretted that vengeance was almost impossible, since the Elster, with its broken bridge, lay between us and the assassins. Our rage increased when we met about 2,000 French, mostly without clothing, and nearly all wounded, who had only escaped death by leaping into the river and swimming across under the fire from the other bank. Among them was Marshal Macdonald, who owed his life to his bodily strength and his practice in swimming. He was completely naked, and his horse had been drowned. I hastily got him some clothes and lent him my led horse, which allowed him to rejoin the Emperor at once and report the disaster he had witnessed, one of the chief episodes in it being the death by drowning of Prince Poniatowski.

The remainder of the French who had crossed the river, having had to get rid of their arms in order to be able to swim, were without means of defence; they were running across the fields to escape from some 400 or 500 Prussians and others, who, not content with the bath of French blood which they had had in the town and suburbs, had laid planks across the pieces of the exploded bridge and had come over to kill such of our unhappy soldiers as they could overtake on the road to Markranstadt. When I caught sight of this band of murderers, I ordered M. Schneit, colonel of the 24th, to make a combined movement with my regiment, by means of which we enclosed these brigands in a vast semicircle. Then I gave the order to sound the charge. The effect was terrible. The bandits, taken by surprise, offered only a feeble resistance, and there was a very great slaughter, for no quarter was given. So enraged was I, that before the charge I had vowed to run my sword through all who came within my reach. Yet when I was in the thick of them and saw that they were drunk, in disorder, and with no commanders but two Saxon officers, who trembled before the approaching vengeance, I saw that it was no case of fighting, but an execution, in which it did

not become me to take a part. I dreaded lest I might actually find pleasure in killing some of the scoundrels with my own hand. So I sheathed my sword, and left the task of exterminating the assassins to my troopers. Two-thirds of them fell on the spot; the rest, among them two officers and several men of the Saxon guards, fled towards the bridge in hope of recrossing the river by the planks. But as they could only go in single file, and our men were pressing them hard, they made for a large inn close by, whence they set to work to fire on my people, some Badenese and Prussian pickets on the further bank aiding.

As it was probable that the noise of the fight might attract large forces towards the bridge, who, without crossing the river, could destroy my two regiments by musketry and artillery fire, I resolved to lose no time. I ordered most of my men to dismount, and, taking a good supply of cartridges, to attack the inn in rear and set fire to the stables and hay-lofts. On this, the assassins, finding themselves about to be caught by the flames, made an effort to escape; but as fast as they appeared at the gates the chasseurs shot them down. In vain did they send one of the Saxon officers to me: I refused to treat the monsters who had butchered our comrades as soldiers who surrendered honourably. The Prussian, Saxon, and Badenese assassins who had crossed the foot-bridge were therefore all exterminated. I announced the fact to General Sébastiani, and he halted the other brigades half-way.

The fire which we had kindled soon reached the neighbouring houses. A great part of the village of Lindenau was burnt, and the reconstruction of the bridge and passage of the enemy's troops in pursuit of the French army thereby delayed.

Our expedition ended, I brought back the brigade to Markranstadt, as well as the 2,000 French who had escaped the disaster at the bridge. Among them were officers of all ranks. The Emperor questioned them as to what they knew regarding the explosion of the mine and the massacre of the French prisoners by the allies. It is probable that the sad tale made Napoleon regret that he had not followed the advice which had been given him that morning to secure the retreat of the army and prevent any attack from the enemy by setting fire to the suburbs, and, even, if necessary, to the town of Leipzig. I may say that nearly all the inhabitants had left the place during the three days' battle.

In our counter-attack at the bridge of Lindenau, only three men in my brigade had been wounded, and only one of my

regiment, but he was one of my bravest and best non-commissioned officers, named Foucher. In the attack on the inn a bullet had made four holes in him, passing through both his thighs. In spite of this severe wound, the brave Foucher went through the retreat on horseback, refused to go into hospital at Erfurt, and accompanied the regiment into France. His comrades and all the troopers of his section took, indeed, particular care of him, and in all respects he deserved it.

When I left Leipzig, I was in fear for the wounded men of my regiment whom I had left there, among them Major Pozac. But, fortunately, the distant suburb in which I had left them was not visited by the Prussians.

After crossing the Saale Napoleon thanked and bade farewell to the officers and some troops of the Confederation of the Rhine who, whether from honourable feeling or for want of an opportunity to desert, were still in our ranks. He carried his magnanimity so far as to allow these soldiers to retain their arms, although as their sovereigns had joined his enemies, he had the right to detain them as prisoners. The French army continued its retreat to Erfurt, with no event except the combat of Kosen, where a single French division beat an Austrian army corps, and took prisoner its commander Count Gyulai.

Always beguiled by the hope of returning to the attack of Germany, in which case the fortresses which he was compelled to leave would be of great service to him, Napoleon established a strong garrison at Erfurt. He had left 25,000 men under Saint-Cyr at Dresden, 30,000 at Hamburg under Davout, while the various fortresses on the Oder and the Elbe were garrisoned in proportion to their importance. These were additional losses to those which Danzig and the other places on the Vistula had already cost us. I need not repeat here what I have said about the inconvenience of distributing forces to hold places from which one is about to retire, but will merely say that Napoleon left in the fortresses of Germany 80,000 soldiers, not one of whom saw France again before the fall of the Empire; which they might, perhaps, have prevented if they had been united on our frontiers.

Our artillery repaired its losses in the arsenal of Erfurt. The Emperor, who up till then had borne his reverses with stoical fortitude, was affected by the desertion of his brother-in-law. Under the pretext of going to defend his kingdom of Naples, Murat left Napoleon, to whom he owed everything. Formerly so brilliant in war, he had done nothing remarkable during this

campaign. It is certain that while he was still among us he had been keeping up a correspondence with Metternich, and the Austrian minister, placing before his eyes the example of Bernadotte, had, in the name of the allied sovereigns, guaranteed him the preservation of his kingdom if he would take his place among Napoleon's enemies. Murat left the French army at Erfurt, and no sooner had he reached Naples than he prepared to make war upon us.

At Erfurt also the Emperor heard of the audacious manœuvre of the Bavarians, his former allies, who, after betraying his cause, had joined an Austrian corps, and marched, under command of General Wrede, with the intention not only of opposing the passage of the French army, but of taking it and the Emperor prisoners. Wrede marched for two days parallel with our army, and was already at Wurzburg with 60,000 men. He detached 10,000 towards Frankfort, and with the remainder proceeded towards the small fortress of Hanau, with a view of blocking the road to the French. He had been with us on the Russian campaign and thought to find the French army still in the wretched state to which cold and hunger had reduced it when it reached the Beresina ; but we soon showed him that, in spite of our misfortunes we still had some troops in good condition, and quite enough to beat the Austrians and Bavarians.

Not knowing that beyond Erfurt the allied troops whom we had fought at Leipzig had been following us only at a considerable distance, Wrede had become very enterprising, and thought to catch us between two fires. This he could not do ; still, as several of the enemy's corps were seeking to outflank our right by way of the Franconian Mountains, while the Bavarians met us in front, our situation might become critical. Then Napoleon, rising to the height of the danger, marched briskly on Hanau, the approaches to which are covered by thick forests, and especially by the famous defile of Geluhausen, through which the Kinzig flows. This stream, the banks of which are very steep, runs between two mountains where there is only a narrow passage for the river, beside which a very fine road has been hewn out of the rock, going from Fulda to Frankfort-on-Main, by way of Hanau. Sébastiani's cavalry, which had acted as advance-guard from Weissenfels to Fulda, ought at that point where the road enters the mountains to have been replaced by infantry. I have never known for what reason that grand principle of war was not followed on this occasion ; but, to our surprise, Exelmans' light cavalry

division continued to march in front of the army. My regiment and the 24th were at the head, and I commanded the brigade. We learned from the peasants that the Austro-Bavarian army was already at Hanau, and that a strong division was coming to meet us to dispute our passage through the defile.

My position as commander of the advance-guard now became very ticklish. How was I, without a single foot-soldier, and with my cavalry shut in between lofty hills and an impassable torrent, to attack infantry whose scouts could climb the rocks and shoot us down at point-blank range? I at once sent to the rear of the column to let the general know, but Exelmans was not to be found. So, as my orders were to advance, and I could not stop the divisions behind me, I marched on, until at an elbow in the valley my scouts reported that there was a detachment of the enemy's hussars in front. The Austrians and Bavarians had made the same mistake as our leaders. We had to attack with cavalry a long and narrow defile in which not more than ten or twelve horses could walk abreast, and they were sending cavalry to defend a place which a hundred light infantry could have held against any number of horse. I was rejoiced to see that the enemy had no infantry, and as I knew by experience that when two columns meet in a narrow place the advantage is always to the side that makes the charge, I sent my picked company ahead at full speed. Only the first section could touch the enemy, but it did so so thoroughly that the Austrian column was thrown into disorder, and my troopers had only to hold their swords straight.

We pursued for more than an hour. The enemy were Ott's regiment, and I never saw finer hussars. They were just from Vienna; and their uniforms, handsome, if a little theatrical, were as new and smart as you could wish. You might have thought they came from a ball-room or a theatre. Their brilliant costume contrasted strangely with the more than modest get-up of our chasseurs, many of whom were still wearing the clothes, stained with smoke and dust, in which they had bivouacked for a year and a half past; but brave hearts and sturdy limbs were inside them. The white jackets of Ott's hussars were soon terribly blood-stained, and the trim regiment lost more than 200 killed and wounded. Not one of ours was touched, as the enemy never had a chance of turning round. Our men took a number of excellent horses and gold-laced jackets. So far all had gone well; but as I galloped after the stream of pursuers I was not without anxiety as to the end of this curious fight. The hills on

each side of the stream were falling away, and it was clear that we were approaching the end of the valley. There we should probably find a plain full of infantry, and might have to pay dear for our success. Happily it was not so. On issuing from the defile we saw nothing but the cavalry, including the main portion of Ott's hussars, whom we had just handled so roughly, and who now drew along some fifteen squadrons with them in their headlong retreat on Hanau.

Then General Sébastiani made his three divisions of cavalry debouch. These were soon supported by the infantry under Victor and Macdonald, with several batteries; the Emperor and part of the guard presently appeared and the remainder of the army followed. We bivouacked in a neighbouring wood, at not more than a league from Hanau and the Austro-Bavarian army.

The Emperor relieved the army very materially by sending all the baggage off to Coblenz, escorted by some battalions of infantry and the cavalry of Lefebvre-Desnouettes and Milhaud. On the morning of the 30th he had with him only Macdonald's and Victor's infantry, 5,000 bayonets in all, and Sébastiani's cavalry.

On the side by which we approached, Hanau is covered by a great forest, through which the road passes, the trees being large enough to allow scarcely impeded movement. The town of Hanau is on the further bank of the Kinzig. General Wrede, who as a rule was not devoid of military talent, had committed the huge blunder of posting his army with the river in its rear; thereby depriving it of the support offered by the fortifications of Hanau. His only means of communication and retreat was by the bridge of Lamboy. No doubt the position which he occupied barred the road to Frankfort and to France, and he thought himself well able to stop us.

At daybreak on October 30 the battle began. It was like a great hunting expedition. A few rounds of grape, the fire of the infantry skirmishers, and a charge in loose order by Sébastiani's cavalry dispersed the enemy's first line, awkwardly posted on the edge of the wood. But when we had advanced a little further, our squadrons could only act in the few clearings, and the light infantry pursued the Bavarians singly, driving them from tree to tree till they got out of the wood. Then they were brought up by the enemy's line, 40,000 strong, with eighty guns in its front. If the Emperor had then had all the troops whom he brought away from Leipzig, a vigorous attack would have mastered the

bridge, and Wrede would have paid dear for his rashness ; but the corps of Mortier, Marmont, and Bertand, and the great park of artillery had been delayed by the defiles, and Napoleon had only 10,000 combatants at his disposal. The enemy should have seized the opportunity for a brisk charge ; but they did not venture it, and their hesitation allowed time for the artillery of the guard to come up. As soon as General Drouot, who commanded it, had fifteen pieces on the field he opened fire ; and his line increased gradually, till it showed fifty guns. These he caused to advance firing, though he had few troops to support him ; but this, owing to the smoke of so great a battery, the enemy did not find out. At last, just as a puff of wind drove the smoke away, the chasseurs of the guard appeared.

At the sight of the bearskins the Bavarian infantry recoiled in consternation. Wishing to check the disorder at any cost, General Wrede made all the cavalry at his disposal charge our guns, and in a moment the battery was surrounded by a cloud of horsemen. But at the voice of their intrepid chief, who, sword in hand, was setting the example of a valiant resistance, the French gunners seized their muskets and remained immovable behind the carriages, whence they fired on the enemy at close quarters. Numbers would, however, have triumphed, but that at the Emperor's order the whole of Sébastiani's cavalry and that of the guard, grenadiers, dragoons, chasseurs, Mamelukes, lancers, dashed furiously on the enemy, killing a great number and dispersing the rest. Then flying upon the squares of Bavarian infantry, they broke them with heavy loss, and the routed Bavarian army fled towards the bridge and the town of Hanau.

The Emperor, on leaving the forest of Hanau, had scarcely gone two leagues on the road to Frankfort when he learned that the battle had begun again behind him. The Bavarian general, who had feared after his defeat that the Emperor would stick to his heels till he had made an end of him, when he saw that the French army cared more about reaching the Rhine than about pursuing him, plucked up courage and made a smart attack on our rear-guard. But the corps of Macdonald, Marmont and Bertrand, who had occupied Hanau during the night, received his army with the bayonet, and overthrew it with great slaughter. General Wrede was severely wounded, and his son-in-law, the Prince of Oettingen, was killed. The command of the enemy's army devolved on the Austrian general Fresnel, who gave orders for a retreat, while we continued our march to the Rhine



unmolested, crossing it on November 2 and 3, after a campaign in which brilliant victories had been mingled with depressing reverses. The cause of these last was Napoleon's mistake in quarrelling with Austria instead of making peace after his victories in the month of June. All Germany followed, and Napoleon soon had the whole of Europe against him.

After our return to France the Emperor stayed only six days at Mainz, and then went to Paris—a prompt departure with which the army found fault. It was admitted that there were strong political reasons calling him to Paris; but it was thought that the duty of reorganizing the army also had claims on him, and that he should have gone to and fro between it and the capital, for experience might have taught him that when he was absent little or nothing was done.

The last cannon-shots which I heard in 1813 were fired at the battle of Hanau, and that day went very near to be the last of my life. My regiment charged five times—twice upon infantry squares, once upon guns, and twice on Bavarian cavalry; but the greatest danger which I ran arose from the explosion of a wagon full of shells, which took place close to me. As I have said, the Emperor ordered the cavalry to make a general charge at a very difficult moment. Now, in such a case, it is not enough for a commanding officer, and especially when he is engaged in a forest, to send his regiment straight forward, as I have seen many do; he must cast a rapid glance over the ground to which his squadrons are coming, so that he may not lead them into swampy places. I marched, therefore, some paces in front, followed by my regimental staff, and having beside me a trumpeter who signalled, as I bade, the obstacles which the various squadrons would find in front of them. Although the trees stood wide apart, the passage through the forest was difficult for cavalry, because the ground was piled with men and horses killed or wounded, and with weapons, guns, and wagons which the Bavarians had left. It is easy to see that it is difficult in such a case for a colonel, as he gallops amid bullets and cannon-balls, to examine the ground which his squadrons have to cross, and at the same time take any thought for his personal safety. I had to leave this to the intelligence and nimbleness of my excellent horse Azolan; but the small group which followed me close had been greatly thinned by a discharge of grape, which had wounded many of my orderlies, and I had only my trumpeter near me, when suddenly from the whole line I heard shouts of “Colonel! colonel! look out!” and

ten paces from me I saw a Bavarian artillery wagon which one of our shells had just set on fire. A huge tree which had been cut down by the cannon-balls barred the road in front of me. To go round would have taken me too long. I called to the trumpeter to stoop, and lying flat over my saddle-bow, I took my horse at the jump. Azolan made a long leap, but not long enough to clear all the branches, and his legs got caught among them. Meantime the wagon was blazing and the powder would take fire in a moment. I gave myself up for lost, when my horse, as though he had understood our common danger, began bounding four or five feet high, always getting further from the wagon, and as soon as he was clear of the branches he went off at such a stretching gallop that he was almost literally *ventre à terre*. I shivered when the explosion took place, but I must have been out of the reach of the bursting shells, for neither my horse nor I was touched. It was otherwise with my young trumpeter, for when the regiment resumed its march after the explosion they saw the poor fellow dead and horribly mutilated by the splinters. His horse also was blown to pieces. My brave Azolan had saved me already at the Katzbach, and now I owed him my life a second time. I caressed him, and, as though to show his joy, the poor animal whinnied aloud. There are moments when one is lead to believe that some creatures have far more intelligence than is generally thought.

I keenly regretted my trumpeter, who was beloved by the whole regiment no less for his courage than for his general behaviour. He was the son of a professor at the college of Toulouse; had been through his course there, and took great delight in spouting Latin. An hour before his death the poor lad, having observed that nearly all the trees in the forest of Hanau were beeches, and that their spreading branches formed a kind of roof, found it a suitable occasion to repeat the Eclogue of Virgil which begins with the verse :—

Tityre, tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi.

Marshal Macdonald, who happened to pass at the moment, laughed heartily, exclaiming, "There's a little chap whose memory isn't disturbed by his surroundings! It is certainly the first time that anyone has recited Virgil under the fire of the enemy's guns."

The remnants of the French army expected when they crossed the Rhine that their hardships would be at an end as soon as they

were on their native soil ; but they were greatly mistaken. The Government and the Emperor himself had so reckoned on our success that no arrangements had been made to receive the troops at the frontier and reorganize them. On the very day of our entry into Mainz the men and horses would have had no food if they had not been billeted about in the neighbouring towns and villages. The inhabitants, however, had had no experience of feeding soldiers since the old Revolutionary wars. They complained loudly, and in fact the charge fell too heavily on the communes.

The sick and wounded were established as well as circumstances permitted in the hospitals of Mainz, and in order to watch the line of the Rhine from Basle to Holland all able-bodied men joined the nuclei of their regiments, and the divisions and army corps, sadly weakened, were distributed along the river. My regiment, with what was left of Sébastiani's corps, went down the Rhine by easy marches. The weather was splendid, and the country lovely ; but we were all heart-broken, foreseeing, as we did, that France was going to lose these fair countries, and that her misfortunes would not stop there.

After passing some time at Cleves and Urdingen, we went on to Nimeguen. On the further bank we could see the Dutch and German population tearing the French flag from their towers and replacing those of their old sovereign. Amid our melancholy thoughts the colonels did their best to reorganize their few remaining troops ; but we could do little for want of supplies. Moreover, the necessity of feeding the army forced the Emperor to keep it scattered ; while in order to organize it, it should have been concentrated. Meanwhile the enemy required time to recover from the rough handling we had given them, and were in no condition to cross the Rhine and interfere with our reorganization. They left us alone, therefore, throughout November and December, and I passed those months chiefly on the banks of the Rhine with the phantom of an army corps commanded by Macdonald.

At length all the colonels received orders to take all their men who were unmounted to the dépôts of their regiments, and that of the 23rd Chasseurs being still at Mons, I went there. There I saw the eventful year 1813 out—a year in which I had borne many toils and incurred many dangers.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

*I BEGAN* the year 1814 at Mons. Physically, I ran no dangers that year equal to those of its predecessors ; but I underwent far greater moral suffering.

All my troopers who were still mounted having remained at Nimeguen, I found at the dépôt only men in want of horses. These I was trying to supply from the Ardennes, when the course of events interfered. On January 1, after nearly three months' hesitation, the enemy crossed the Rhine at several points. The two most important were Caub, between Bingen and Coblenz, close to the Lurlei ; and Basle, where the Swiss violated their neutrality by throwing open the bridge. They have a way of insisting on or renouncing their neutrality according to their interests of the moment.

The number of the invading troops was reckoned at 500,000 to 600,000. France was exhausted by twenty-five years of war ; more than half her soldiers were prisoners in foreign lands, and many of her provinces were ready to break away on the first opportunity ; among them, that to which Mons, the capital of the department of Jemmapes, belonged. This broad and rich country, annexed at first to France *de facto* by the war of 1792, and then *de jure* by the Treaty of Amiens, had grown so accustomed to the union that it had distinguished itself after the Russian disaster by the zeal which it displayed in helping the Emperor to restore his army to its former footing, and the willingness with which it complied with all kinds of requisitions. But our losses in Germany had taken heart out of the Belgians, and I found the spirit of the population changed. There was regret for the old paternal government of Austria, and a keen desire for separation from France, and the perpetual wars which were ruining commerce and industry. In short, Belgium was only awaiting the opportunity to revolt ; and owing to her position in the rear of the weak army corps which we had on the Rhine, nothing could have been more dangerous for us. The Emperor accordingly sent troops to Brussels under General Maison, a man of ability and solid character.

After visiting various departments he found that that of Jemmapes, and especially the town of Mons, was deeply disaffected. People talked openly of taking men against the weak garrisons ; nor could the commandant, General O——, gouty, old, and

indolent, as a native of Belgium, besides, afraid of compromising himself in the eyes of his countrymen, have done anything to hinder it. General Maison relieved him of his functions, and appointed me commandant of the department of Jemmapes. It was a difficult duty ; for next to the men of Liège, those of Mons and its district are the boldest and most turbulent in all Belgium ; while to keep them in check I had only a battalion of 400 recruits, some gendarmes, and 200 dismounted troopers of my own regiment, fifty of whom were natives of those parts. All I could really count on, therefore, were the remaining 150 chasseurs, who, being French by birth, and having all fought under me, would have followed me anywhere. The officers were good ; and those of the infantry, especially the major, were perfectly willing to back me up. Yet I could not but see that if we came to blows the odds would be great. From my hotel I could see every day 3,000 or 4,000 peasants and artisans, armed with big sticks, assembling in the square and listening to the talk of certain retired Austrian officers. These men, all wealthy and of good family, had left the service when Belgium was joined to France, and now preached against the Empire, which had loaded them with taxes, carried their children off to the wars, and so forth. This talk found all the readier listeners in that it was addressed by great landowners to their tenants and persons whom they employed and over whom they had great influence.

Every day, too, brought news of the enemy's advance from Brussels, driving before them the remnants of Macdonald's corps. All French officials left the department to take refuge at Valenciennes and Cambrai. Finally, the mayor of Mons, M. Duval de Beaulieu, felt bound in honour to warn me that I and my small garrison were no longer safe amid the excited populace, and that I had better evacuate the town. No hindrance would be offered, as the regiment had lived on perfectly good terms with the inhabitants. This proposal came, I was aware, from a committee of ex-Austrian officers, and they had sent it through the mayor in the hope of intimidating me. Therefore I determined to show my teeth, and begged M. Duval to summon a meeting of the town council and notables, when I would reply to the proposal he had made. Half-an-hour later my garrison was under arms ; and as soon as the town council, accompanied by the wealthier inhabitants appeared in the square, I mounted my horse so that all could hear, and, having told the mayor that before talking to him and the council I had an important order to give my troops, I imparted

to them the proposal which had been made that we should leave without a fight the town which had been given into our keeping. They were indignant, and said so plainly. I added that no doubt the ramparts were broken down in many places and had no guns, so that it would be difficult to defend them against regular troops ; but that if, contrary to the laws of nations, the civil population of the town and district rose against us, we need not confine ourselves to the defensive, but should treat them as rebels, and have the right to attack them by every means in our power. I therefore ordered my men to take possession of the belfry, and thence, after half-an-hour's delay and three summons by beat of drum, to fire on the crowd in the square ; while patrols were to clear the streets, shooting down especially the country people, who had left their work to make trouble for us. Lastly, I ordered that, fighting once begun, the town was to be set on fire to occupy the inhabitants, and that in order to prevent the flames from being extinguished the men were to keep firing on the burning quarters.

The nobles who had promoted the rising, and the inhabitants of the town, felt the force of my discourse, and began to withdraw ; but the peasants did not stir ; so I ordered up two wagons of ammunition and distributed a hundred cartridges to each soldier. Then I gave the order to load, and bade the drums beat the three rolls which were to precede a volley. At the dreaded signal the crowd fled in disorder into the nearest streets, and in a few moments the leaders of the Austrian party, with the mayor at their head, came to shake me by the hand and implore me to spare the town. I agreed on condition that they would instantly order the colliers and workmen to return home. They accepted eagerly, and the young men of fashion who had the best horses galloped out at every gate, met the crowds, and sent them back without any demur to their villages. This ready obedience confirmed my belief that the movement had powerful leaders, and that I and my garrison would soon have been prisoners had I not frightened the promoters by threatening to use all means, even arson, rather than give in to insurgents.

The Belgians are great musicians. That evening there was to be an amateur concert, to which my officers and I, as well as the prefect of the department, were invited. We settled to go as if nothing had happened, and we did rightly ; for so far as appearances went, we were perfectly well received. As we chatted with the leaders of the movement we pointed out to them that the fate of

Belgium was to be decided not by the population in rebellion, but by the belligerent armies, and that it would be madness in them to excite labourers and peasants to fight and shed blood in order to hasten by a few days a decision for which they should wait.

An old retired Austrian general, a native of Mons, then told his fellow-townsmen that they had done very wrong in plotting the capture of the garrison. It would have brought calamity on the town, since soldiers may never surrender without a fight. All admitted the justice of this, and from that day garrison and inhabitants lived on the same good terms as before. A few days later the people of Mons gave us a striking proof of their loyalty, under the following circumstances. As the allied army advanced, a crowd of vagabonds, chiefly Prussians, got themselves up like Cossacks, and, urged by the lust of plunder, fell upon everything which had been official property during the French occupation, seizing even without scruple the property of individuals not belonging to the army. A strong band of these pretended Cossacks made their way even to the gates of Brussels and looted the château of Tervueren, carrying off all the horses of the stud which the Emperor had formed there. Then, breaking up into detachments, they went marauding all over Belgium. Coming into the department of Jemmapes, they tried to bring about a rising, and when this did not succeed they thought it was owing to the fact that Mons was deterred from pronouncing for them by the fear which the colonel commanding there had inspired among the people. They determined, therefore, to carry me off or kill me; but in order not to arouse my suspicions by employing too many men on that service, they sent only three hundred. The leader of these partisans must have had good information, for, knowing that I had too few people to guard properly the old gates and half-demolished ramparts, he brought his horsemen close to the town on a dark night, and the greater part of them, dismounting, made their way in silence through the streets in the direction of the *Hotel de la Poste*, where I had at first lodged. But since hearing that the enemy had crossed the Rhine, I had taken to going every evening to the barracks and passing the night with my troops. It was lucky I did, for the German Cossacks surrounded the hotel, rummaged all the rooms, and in their rage at finding no French officers fell out with the landlord. They ill-treated him, plundered him, and got drunk, men and officers alike, on his best wine.

A Belgian named Courtois, formerly corporal in my regiment, for whom, as one of my best soldiers, I had obtained the Legion of Honour, entered the hotel at that moment. He had lost a leg in Russia in the previous year, and I had been fortunate enough to save his life by procuring for him the means of returning to France. For this he was so grateful that while I was at Mons in the winter of 1814 he often came to see me, on those occasions putting on the uniform of the 23rd Chasseurs, which he had so honourably worn. Now it happened that on the night in question Courtois, being on his way back to the house of a relation with whom he was staying, saw the enemy's detachment making for the *Hotel de la Poste*. Although the brave corporal knew that I no longer stopped there, he wished to make sure that his colonel was not in any danger, and boldly walked into the hotel, taking his relation with him. At the sight of the French uniform and the decoration the Prussians were infamous enough to assault the poor maimed man, and try to tear the cross from his breast. The old soldier tried to defend his decoration; the Prussian Cossacks killed him, dragged his body into the street, and continued their orgies.

In proportion to my weak garrison, Mons was so large that I had fortified myself in the barrack and concentrated my right defence on that point, forbidding my soldiers to go in the direction of the great square. I had been informed that the enemy were there, but I did not know their strength, and feared that the inhabitants might unite with them. But as soon as these latter heard of the murder of their compatriot Courtois, a man esteemed by all the neighbourhood, they resolved to avenge him, and, forgetting for the moment their grudge against the French, they deputed the brother of Courtois and some of the most prominent and bravest among themselves to ask me to put myself at their head and drive out the Cossacks. No doubt the excesses which these people had committed in the hotel made every citizen fear for his own family and house, and had quite as much as the death of Courtois to do with their desire to turn the Cossacks out. They would, no doubt, have acted very differently if regular troops had entered the town instead of marauders and assassins. Nevertheless, I thought it my duty to profit by the goodwill of the inhabitants, and, taking part of my force, I went toward the square. Meanwhile the infantry major, who knew the town well, went, by my orders, with the remainder, and formed an ambuscade near the breach by which the Prussian Cossacks had got into the place.



At the first shots which our people fired on the scamps the hotel and the square were in a tumult. Those of the enemy who were not killed on the spot made off as fast as their legs would carry them, but a good many lost their way in the streets, and were polished off in detail. As for those who got as far as the spot where they had left their horses fastened to the trees on the promenade, they found the major there, and were received by a volley at close quarters. When day came, we counted, in the town or on the breach, more than 200 of the enemy dead, while we had not lost a single man, for our adversaries were too stupefied by wine and strong drink to be able to defend themselves. Such of them as survived the surprise slipped along the ruins of the old ramparts and made off into the country. There they were all captured or killed by the peasants, who were furious at hearing of the death of poor Courtois. He was regarded as the glory of the neighbourhood; the people called him *wooden-leg*, and he was as dear to them as another wooden-leg, General Daumesnil, was to the people of the Paris suburbs.

I do not quote the combat at Mons as anything to be vain about, for with the National Guards I had 1,200 or 1,400 men, while the Prussian Cossacks were not much more than 300; but I thought I would relate this curious engagement to show how fickle is the spirit of the masses. All the peasants and colliers, who a month before had come in a crowd to exterminate, or at least disarm, the handful of French left in Mons, had now taken sides with them against the Prussians because the Prussians had killed one of their countrymen. I was very sorry, too, for the brave Courtois, who had fallen a victim to his attachment for me. The most important trophy of our victory was the three hundred and odd horses which the enemy had left in our hands. They came nearly all from the district of Berg, and were very good, so I embodied them in my regiment, for which this unexpected remount came very conveniently.

I passed another month at Mons in perfect friendship with the inhabitants, but the advance of the enemy's armies became so serious that the French had to leave not only Brussels, but all Belgium, and re-enter the frontiers of France proper. I was ordered to bring the *dépôt* of my regiment to Cambrai, where, with the horses which we had taken from the Prussian Cossacks, I was able to replace in the ranks three hundred good troopers returned from Leipzig, and thus to form two fine squadrons, which, under Major Sigaldi, were shortly sent to the army which

the Emperor had assembled in Champagne. They attracted notice there, and sustained the credit of the 23rd Chasseurs, particularly at the battle of Champaubert, where Captain Duplessis was killed.

I have always had a great predilection for the lance, a terrible weapon in the hands of a good horseman. I therefore obtained permission to distribute to my squadrons the lances which the artillery officers could not bring away when they evacuated the Rhine fortresses. So well were they appreciated that several other cavalry regiments also asked for them, and were glad to have got them.

The regimental dépôts being obliged to move to the left bank of the Seine to avoid falling into the hands of the enemy, mine went to Nogent-le-Roi. We had a good number of troopers, but scarcely any horses. The Government was making great efforts to collect some at Versailles, where a central cavalry dépôt had been created under the command of General Préval. Like his predecessor, General Bouchier, he understood the details of organization much better than war, of which he had seen very little. He discharged his duties very well; but as he could not improvise horses or equipments, and was particular about not sending out any but well-organized detachments, they went off very slowly. I groaned over this, but no colonel could join the army without an order from the Emperor, and, to economize his resources, he had forbidden any more officers to be sent to the war than were proportionate to the number of men that they had to command. In vain, therefore, did I beg General Préval to let me go to Champagne; he fixed my departure for the end of March, at which date I was to join the army with a so-called "marching" regiment, composed of mounted men from my dépôt and some others. Till then I was allowed to reside at Paris with my family; for my lieutenant-colonel, M. Caseneuve, could command and organize the 200 men who were still at Nogent-le-Roi, and I could always inspect them in a few hours. In Paris therefore I passed most of the month of March, one of the saddest times of my life, although I was with those who were dearest to me. But the Imperial Government to which I was attached, and which I had so long defended at the cost of my blood, was crumbling on all sides. From Lyons the enemy's armies occupied a great part of France, and it was easy to see that they would soon reach the capital.

It is impossible to give any idea of the agitation which prevailed.

Few of the inhabitants had foreseen an invasion ; and as for me, who had expected it, and had seen the horrors of war so near, I was in great trouble to know where I could place my wife and little child in safety. The kind old Marshal Sérurier offered them shelter at the Invalides, of which he was governor, and I was calmed by the thought that as the French had always respected the places where old soldiers lived, the enemy would do the same. So I took my family there, and left Paris before the allies entered. I reported myself to General Préval at Versailles, and he put me in command of a small column formed of troopers from my own regiment and from the 9th and 12th Chasseurs, with orders to rendezvous the same day at Rambouillet. There I found my horses and outfit, and took the command of my squadrons.

As soon as Napoleon learnt that Paris had capitulated, and that the two small corps of Marmont and Mortier were withdrawing to join him, he ordered them to take up a position at Essonnes, half-way between Paris and Fontainebleau, and went himself to the latter town as the heads of the columns returned from Saint-Dizier were reaching it, which shows that his intention was to march on Paris. The enemy's generals have since admitted that if the Emperor had attacked them, they would not have dared to accept battle. Behind them was the Seine, and Paris with its million inhabitants, who might rise during the battle, barricade the streets and bridges, and cut off their retreat. They had, therefore, determined to retire, and encamp on the heights of Belleville, Montmartre, and Chaumont, which command the right bank of the Seine and the road to Germany.

But fresh events detained them in Paris. M. de Talleyrand, once a bishop, now married, had been to all appearance most devotedly attached to the Emperor, who had made him Prince of Benevento, Grand Chamberlain, and so on. But his pride was hurt at being no longer Napoleon's first confidant and director of his policy, and he had, since the disastrous Russian campaign, put himself at the head of the smothered opposition set up by the malcontents of all parties, and especially the aristocracy of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. In the days of his prosperity they had submitted to and even served Napoleon ; now they were his enemies, and without openly compromising themselves, attacked him by all available means. The chiefs were such men as the Abbé de Pradt, Archbishop of Malines, M. de Chateaubriand, M. Laisné, and others, all able men, who, directed by Talleyrand, the ablest intriguer of them all, had for some time

been looking out for a chance of upsetting Napoleon. They saw that they would never have one more favourable than the present. But though Napoleon was at the moment greatly weakened, he was not quite beaten. Besides the army which had just done such wonders under him, there were Suchet's between the Pyrenees and the Garonne, numerous troops under Soult, and two fine divisions at Lyons. The Army of Italy was still formidable and thus, though the English were in occupation of Bordeaux, Napoleon could still collect a large force and prolong the war indefinitely if he raised the population, whom the enemy's requisitions had exasperated.

M. de Talleyrand and his party saw that if they allowed the Emperor time to bring up all these troops to Paris, he might beat the allies in the streets, or retire to the loyal provinces and continue the war till he tired the enemy into making peace. The Government must be changed. But there was the difficulty. They wanted to restore the Bourbons, while part of the nation wished to leave Napoleon on the throne, or call his son to it. There was the same difference of opinion among the allies; the Kings of England and Prussia being on the side of the Bourbons, while the Emperor of Russia, who never liked them, was disposed to support the interests of Napoleon's son.

In order to settle the question by taking the first step, and as it were to force the hand of the allied sovereigns, Talleyrand caused a score of young aristocrats to appear on horseback on the Place Louis XV wearing white cockades. Led by Viscount Talon, an old comrade of mine, from whom I have the details, they made their way towards the Emperor Alexander's hotel, loudly shouting, "Long live Louis XVIII! Down with the tyrant!" At first the bystanders were merely stupefied; presently the crowd began to threaten, and the most resolute members of the cavalcade wavered. The first outburst of royalism had missed fire, but they repeated the scene at various points. Sometimes they were hooted, sometimes applauded. The Parisians required a cry to arouse them, and that which Talon and his friends had started resounded all day in the ears of the Emperor Alexander. In the evening Talleyrand was able to say to him, "Your Majesty can judge for yourself with what unanimity the country desires the restoration of the Bourbons." From that moment, though Napoleon's partisans, as the events of the next year showed, were many more than those of Louis XVIII, his cause was lost.

## EPILOGUE

• *GENERAL MARBOT'S* "Memoirs" end with the first abdication of Napoleon, so that we lose what we would gladly have had—his reminiscences of the Elba and Waterloo period; though a few letters exist giving some scanty details with regard to the Waterloo campaign. From an article by M. Cuvillier-Fleury, published in the *Journal des Débats* shortly after the general's death, we learn that at the first Restoration he was maintained in the army, and placed in command of the 7th Hussars. As might be expected when Napoleon returned, Marbot and his regiment went back to their former allegiance, and at Waterloo they formed part of the corps under the Count of Erlon; being posted on the extreme right of the French line. On April 10 he had written:—

I have to guard the line from Mouchin to Chérencé. It is not much trouble to do, for the English do not stir, and are as quiet at Tournay as if they were in London. I think that everything will pass off peaceably.

Writing from Saint-Amand in the following month, he still reports all quiet; the enemy's troops deserting in heaps; men flocking "thick as flies" to the French regiments. "People think there will be no fighting. Here we think that almost certain."

By June 13 the complexion of affairs is changed, and he writes from Pont-sur-Sambre: "I do not think there will be a battle for another five days"—a very accurate forecast. After the affair of June 17 at Genappe, Marbot was promoted major-general; but this appointment did not take effect. The following letter, written on June 26 from Laon, gives Marbot's fresh impressions of Waterloo:—

I cannot get over our defeat. We were manœuvred like so many pumpkins. I was with my regiment on the right flank of the army almost throughout the battle. They assured me that Marshal Grouchy would come up at that point; and it was guarded only by my regiment with three guns and a battalion of infantry—not nearly enough. Instead of Grouchy, what arrived was Blücher's corps. You can imagine how we were served. We were driven in, and in an instant the enemy was on our rear. The mischief might have been repaired, but no one gave any orders. The big generals were making

bad speeches at Paris, the small ones lose their heads, and all goes wrong. I got a lance-wound in the side; it is pretty severe, but I thought I would stay to set a good example. If everyone had done the same we might yet get along; but the men are deserting, and no one stops them. Whatever people may say, there are 50,000 men in this neighbourhood who might be got together; but to do it we should have to make it a capital offence to quit your post, or to give leave of absence. Everybody gives leave, and the coaches are full of officers departing. You may judge if the soldiers stay. There will not be one left in a week, unless they are checked by the death penalty. The Chambers can save us if they like; but we must have severe measures and prompt action. No food is sent to us, and so the soldiers pillage our poor France as if they were in Russia. I am at the outposts, before Laon; we have been made to promise not to fire, and all is quiet.

In a letter written fifteen years later to General F. de Grouchy, Marbot enters more into detail. From this we learn that his regiment formed part of the force which was thrown back *en potence* on the extreme right, fronting the stream of the Dyle, as may be seen in any plan of the battle. The Emperor's instructions, conveyed to him by his old comrade, Labédoyère, who was then acting as aide-de-camp to Napoleon, were, while keeping the bulk of his force in view of the field of battle, to push forward his outposts towards Saint-Lambert and Ottignies; leaving a line of cavalry pickets a quarter of a league apart one from the other, so that when Grouchy arrived the news might be passed along without delay. One of these detachments reached Moustier about 1 p.m., and the officer in command at once sent back word that the French troops posted on the right bank of the Dyle were crossing the river—i.e., falling back. This intelligence was forwarded to the Emperor, and an orderly officer soon came with orders to Marbot to push as far as possible in the direction of Wavre. Near Saint-Lambert one of his sections fell in with some Prussian cavalry, capturing an officer and a few men. These were promptly sent to the Emperor, and Marbot hastened with a squadron towards Saint-Lambert. There he saw a strong column advancing, and again sent intelligence to head-quarters. But the reply was that it could be nothing but Grouchy; that the prisoners were doubtless some Prussian stragglers flying before his advance, and that Marbot might go forward boldly. Of course he had to obey orders; but soon had proof positive as to the nature of the advancing column. After hard fighting he had to retire, again reporting the circumstances to the Emperor.

So possessed, however, was Napoleon with his own view of the case, that he merely sent back the adjutant with orders to Marbot "to let Grouchy know." By this time his outposts were all falling back, and soon he was closely engaged with the English left, near Frischermont, and received the wound which he mentions in the letter already quoted. A report which he drew up later in the year at the instance of Davout, then Minister of War, has unfortunately disappeared.

After Waterloo, Marbot had to leave France; and during the period of his exile, which he spent in Germany, he composed the work by which, until the appearance of the present Memoirs, he was best known—a criticism on General Rogniart's "*Considérations sur l'Art de la Guerre*." It was this which earned the flattering reference to him, accompanying a legacy of 100,000 francs, in Napoleon's will. "I bid Colonel Marbot," he says, "continue to write in defence of the glory of the French armies, and to the confusion of calumniators and apostates."

In 1818 Marbot was recalled to France and placed on half-pay. He occupied his leisure by writing another book, "*On the Necessity of Increasing the Military Forces of France*," which was well thought of. Presently his services were again in request, and in 1829 he was placed in command of the 8th Chasseurs. In the following year he became aide-de-camp to the Duke of Orleans, and a second time attained the rank of major-general. From that time till the fall of the monarchy "of July" he was constantly employed. He received one more wound, when he was nearly sixty years old. During the Medeah expedition in Algiers he was hit by a bullet in the left knee. As he was being carried to the rear, he remarked with a smile to the Duke: "This is your fault, sir." "How so?" naturally said the Duke. "Did I not hear you say, before the fighting began, that if any of your staff got wounded, you could bet it would be Marbot? You see you have won!" On the death of the Duke in 1842, he was attached to the staff of the Count of Paris, then a child of four years old; a post which at all events may have kept the veteran out of danger. In 1848 he was placed for the last time on the retired list; and in November, 1854, his honourable life came to an end. Few men of that age seem to have left a more creditable record.

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